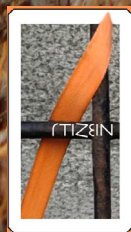


ARTIZEIN

Arts & Teaching Journal

**An
Arts-Based
Contemplative
Pause**
Part I



ARTIZEIN

art (n.) early 13c., “skill as a result of learning or practice,” from Old French art (10c.), from Latin *artem* (nominative *ars*) “work of art; practical skill; a business, craft,” from PIE **ar-ti-* (cognates: Sanskrit *rtih* “manner, mode;” Greek *arti* “just,” *artios* “complete, suitable,” *artizein* “to prepare;” Latin *artus* “joint;” Armenian *arnam* “make;” German *art* “manner, mode”), from root **ar-* “fit together, join”

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The editors of ARTIZEIN are grateful for the support of Southern Illinois University Carbondale, the assistance of Gregory Wendt in naming the journal Artizein, R. Michael Fisher's painting in the ARTIZEIN banner featured on the website and the thoughtful work of our writers and readers.

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Cover art by: Jennifer Markides. Image is a detail of the photograph Man and River.
Journal design and layout by: Gregory Wendt


This issue is dedicated as an artful prayer to the arts-based poetic scholar Dr. Carl Leggo who stepped back from being a co-editor of this special issue to fully live his journey with cancer.

May the prayers enfolded in these pages touch Carl and all those who have and will be touched by his work that has so influenced arts-based and contemplative teachers and researchers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6	Barbara Bickel, Susan Walsh & Diane Conrad AN ARTS-BASED CONTEMPLATIVE PAUSE INTRODUCTION TO PART 1: SHARING RADICAL CREATIVE POSSIBILITIES
12	Vicki Kelly AN OFFERING AND A PRAYER
15	Carl Leggo HOLDING FAST TO H: RUMINATIONS ON THE ARTS PRECONFERENCE
26	Robert Christopher Nellis SHARING FOOTPRINTS: DWELLING WITH/IN LOSS
38	George Belliveau PERFORMING RESEARCH: CONTEMPLATING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A 'MAN'
46	Janice S. Valdez LOOKING FOR WATER STORIES
48	Annemarie Cuculiza-Brunke BORN DIFFERENT, BUT STILL THE SAME
58	Morgan Gardner RELATIONS TO LIVE BY
61	Jennifer Markides MAKING PEACE WITH THE HIGHWOOD RIVER: ONE YEAR IN CONTEMPLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHS AND FLOWS
74	Michelle Searle & Lynn Fels AN ARTISTIC CONTEMPLATIVE INQUIRY: WHAT ARRIVES IN CO-CONTEMPLATING ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

SUBMISSIONS

 ARTIZEIN welcomes manuscripts addressing the consequence of understanding the state of our teaching of the arts relative to the arts themselves. We intend to offer articles, artworks, poems, essays, visual journals, etc. that;

- deepen perceptions about creative capabilities for a broad spectrum of the population, how this innate ability unfolds and develops in a wide array of ways, tempos, and settings,
- inform and engage readers in expansive thinking about what art and its teaching/transmitting/facilitating are, where it might occur, and the many effects the arts have on its practitioners and witnesses,
- direct attention to instructional approaches (some new and innovative, others neglected or forgotten) that are currently restricted by an emphasis on normalized art instruction in public schooling.

Please visit our website for specific information related to upcoming volumes:

http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/atj/call_for_papers.html

AN ARTS-BASED CONTEMPLATIVE PAUSE

INTRODUCTION TO PART 1: SHARING RADICAL CREATIVE POSSIBILITIES

BARBARA BICKEL, SUSAN WALSH & DIANE CONRAD

BIOS:

Barbara Bickel is an artist, researcher, and educator currently practicing in Calgary, Alberta Canada where she co-founded Studio M*: A Research Creation Lab Intersecting Arts, Culture and Healing in 2017. She is an Associate Professor of Art Education Emeritus at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, USA. To view her art portfolio and arts-based research on-line visit <http://www.barbarabickel.com>

Susan Walsh is a writer/poet, arts-based researcher, and student of Tibetan Buddhism and contemplative photography. She is also a Professor

of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Susan wrote *Contemplative and artful openings: Researching women and teaching* (Routledge, 2018) and co-edited *Arts-based and contemplative practices in research and teaching: Honoring presence* (Routledge, 2015) with Barbara Bickel and Carl Leggo.

Diane Conrad is Professor of Drama/Theatre Education at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. She is passionate about the arts as ways of knowing and being.



We are delighted to introduce the first part of a two-part special issue of *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*; our special issue attends to arts-based and contemplative practices in inquiry and teaching. We share this first part with you

as a larger invitation to all people to experience the radical healing that the combination of arts and contemplative practices can bring to our teaching, research, and personal lives. Also, we offer this two-part special issue of *Artizein* as a

gift within the framework of a healing gift economy. The foundation of a gift economy is a reciprocal circle of care that is other-focused rather than ego-focused and based on a maternal paradigm of unconditional m/othering (Vaughan, 1997, 2007), a paradigm based on love, care and abundance—not fear, mistrust and scarcity. Communities that operate today in a love-based circle of care form a stark contrast to the dominant “imperialist, white supremacist, patriarchal capitalist” exchange economy that sent the world and its inhabitants, human and more-than-human, spiraling out of ecological harmony and into ecological, cultural and political destruction. We, as artists, researchers, and teachers, are impacted by the

neoliberal institutions of education that we teach and research within, institutions that have adapted the fear-based values of the dominant competitive exchange economy which, in its scarcity mentality, too often exploits the gift-givers by taking their offerings to enable an unsustainable economy that expands itself to the detriment of all.

Within this destructive global context, the idea for a special journal issue arose from the collective yearnings of a group of about 50 artists, researchers, and teachers who gathered for a pre-conference day-long event in May 2017 in Toronto, Canada, as part of the annual conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE). The pre-conference was commissioned by the executive of the Arts Researchers and Teachers Society (ARTS) as an opportunity to open wider conversations among diverse scholar-artists who are living and/or working in the Canadian context – and who are drawn to contemplative arts practices. Diane Conrad, ARTS pre-conference organizer for that year, initiated an innovative approach to the event. Having attended many conferences over the years, she believed that the pre-conference space could offer a unique opportunity

to engage with colleagues and their scholarly passions in ways more responsive to ARTS members' collective aesthetic sensibilities. She envisioned a day of sharing, conversing about, and doing creative work together as a gift for all (Hyde, 2007; Kimmerer, 2015). Her colleagues Susan Walsh, Barbara Bickel, and Carl Leggo – and seven other arts-based researchers working in the area of contemplative arts inquiry – had just published their edited book *Arts-based and Contemplative Practices in Research and Teaching: Honoring Presence*. Diane invited Barbara, Susan, and Carl to work together to facilitate a day of contemplative arts-based activities with attendees. The innovative, community-centered, collaborative workspace in Toronto that they rented for the event had a fully equipped kitchen facility. This accommodated Diane's desire for the day to share food together . . . as an arts-based contemplative practice in itself. With help from friends, she created a menu, shopped for, and prepared fresh and healthy food for the group. While she regretted not being fully involved in the sessions throughout the day, she was delighted to spend time in the kitchen seeing to the physical nourishment of her dear colleagues as they

explored contemplative arts-based practices together.

Diane's desire to nurture the arts-based and contemplative focus for the pre-conference event through all moments of the day, including food sharing, became foundational in terms of setting the context for gift-giving in an overall sense. As the planning conversations among Susan, Barbara, Carl, and Diane unfolded over several months, they realized that the tone, atmosphere and format of the day would have to be something different from the usual presentation fare of conferences; a vision of a restorative retreat-like environment emerged. They labelled their call for proposals a "Call for Collaborators," and asked people to consider their thoughts about and experiences of "contemplation" and "contemplative arts practices" as they framed their proposals. In the call, they also indicated their intention that the retreat be an opportunity to "open up space and time for conversation, creation, and contemplation" and that the day be "a creative gathering where everyone's offerings and presence . . . contributes to a collaborative engagement with the arts and contemplative practices": a day of gift offerings and shared whole group practic-

es—nourishing and restorative experiences in a slow rhythm. They accepted all proposals and invited participants to share their proposals with one another in advance of the conference through a group Google drive folder. In this way, participants were able to become familiar with one another's work and attend to potential new connections in advance of the retreat.

In Part Two of this two-part special issue of *Artizein* (which will appear in 2019), Susan and Barbara will share their reflections on the planning process for the pre-conference retreat. They do so in response to requests from those who found the pre-conference retreat restorative and generative, and who wanted to know more about how the planning and facilitation process evolved so that it could be shared forward into future gatherings. In the introduction to Part Two, they will also share an appendix that includes the day's outline developed by Carl, Susan, and Barbara as co-facilitators. Further, Susan and Barbara will offer, in the form of a found poem, some of the collective wisdom gathered in the closing circle of participants: ideas, words and phrases that arrived as we wondered together about

several questions, both in advance of the retreat day and also during it. Part Two will also include an overall closing response by artist, educator and therapist Peter London who reflects on his reading—and dwelling with—the pieces in both Parts One and Two of the special issue.

This issue, Part One, features pieces by author-artists who attended the pre-conference retreat as well as Carl Leggo's poetic reflections as co-facilitator.



We invite you, as a reader, to pause and reflect on each of these remarkable contributions: a diverse collection of art forms, including music, visual art, poetry, and a variety of other written

genres. Below, we also share a glimpse of the collaborative peer editing process that took place among contributors and editors, a process that reinforces our intentions of creating a circle of care. Finally, we include a heartfelt dedication of this two part special issue on arts-based and contemplative practices in inquiry and teaching.

Part One: An Arts-Based and Contemplative Pause—Contributions

We are honoured to open Part One of our two-part special issue of *Artizein* with a prayer by Indigenous flute artist **Vicki Kelly**. Vicki's breath sends the messages contained in this journal issue to the four directions, to the sky above and earth below, and into the center spiral of all. Vicki's prayer is followed by poetry and contemplations by **Carl Leggo**, whose writing is a way to "slow down and linger with memories, experiences and emotions" and also to "hold out [his] hands in both gratitude and invitation, always seeking to make connections."

Robert Nellis gently re-enters the contemplative practice of *Lectio Divina*, introduced to participants during the pre-conference; Robert inquires poetically and reflectively through memories into the moment “togetherness or being with move[s] from presence to absence.” **George Belliveau** poignantly delves into the experience of male military veterans through a creative self-reflective monologue, bringing forward for questioning cultural masculinist-based understandings of “what it means to be a man in today’s society.” A poem by **Janice Valdez** flows from her experience of deep listening to First Nations peoples during a research study, of their relations with water treatment systems in their communities. **Annemarie Cuculiza-Brunke**, with vulnerable honesty, then enters the uncharted waters of “challenges that siblings of people with disabilities face” through autobiographical, poetic, and letter writing in a healing-recovery process. Poetic moments of wonder are revealed by **Morgan Gardner** as she shares the (re)visioning of her academic life through meditations on nature. **Jennifer Markides** follows, writing of a challenging experience with a natural disaster in

her contemplative visual essay into how she made peace with the “river that overflowed its banks and besieged her community.” Lastly, **Michelle Searle** and **Lynn Fels** offer a found poem based on their co-inquiry as artist and teachers into the oft avoided “landscape of the arts in relation to assessment and evaluation.”



Collaborative Peer Revision and Editing

The process of co-editing this special issue stepped outside of the competitive-based peer review process of academic journals and instead walked into a collaborative peer revision/editing process modelled on the way that the book, *Arts-Based and Contemplative Practices in Re-*

search and Teaching unfolded (Walsh, Bickel, & Leggo, 2015). We share our peer revision/editing process as a gift-sharing model for future use by other editors of journals and books.

To begin, the co-editors (Susan and Barbara) of this special issue (Parts One and Two) formed four groups of authors who then read each other’s articles. Each group of peer editors included a range of writers from Master’s level graduate students to full professors. After reading the articles, the authors in each group reviewed each other’s articles using guidelines provided by the co-editors. This was followed by an on-line real-time conversation within each small group to discuss the articles in more detail.

After this conversation, the authors revised their articles and sent them back to the group for review again. Upon receiving feedback from their peer group and making additional revisions, the articles were sent to the issue co-editors (Susan and Barbara) who co-reviewed them. At this point there were numerous back and forth communications between the co-editors and the

authors to bring the articles to completion. Through this peer revision/editing process the articles have been engaged with carefully by up to six different reviewers, including the two main guest editors.

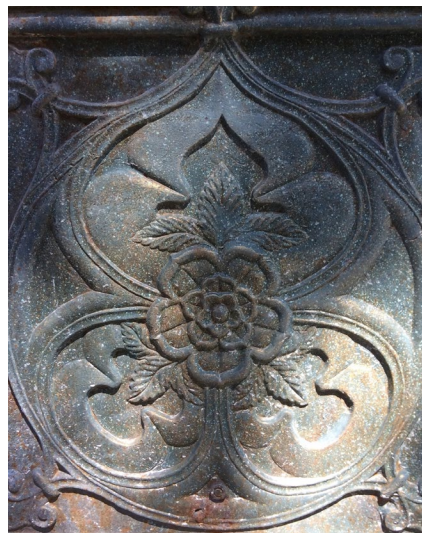
The peer revision/editing process, although perhaps seemingly complex, was a smooth process of coming to a whole. In this way this special issue carries on the relational co-evolving model of generative peer dialogue that contributed to the successful collection of writings in the book that inspired the pre-conference. The intent, both of the book and this special issue, is to contemplatively and creatively respond in supportive caring relationships to/with each other's ideas and writing. This reciprocal relational practice contradicts the dominant academic model of anonymous peer review based in an individualistic,

competitive, survival model of scholarship, while retaining rigour, in line with contemplative practices, through compassionate criticality.

Dedication of this Special Two-Part Issue

Finally, during the process of co-editing this special issue, we, as editors, have supported each other's journeys through retirement, medical leaves, and life obstacles. At the start of our work, Carl Leggo, as

co-facilitator of the pre-conference, was part of the early stages of the journal editing process. Not long after, he was diagnosed with cancer and stepped back from co-editing. This special two-part issue of *Artizein* is dedicated to Carl as a heartfelt thank you prayer for his passionate and tireless gift of teaching, research, editing, and ever poetic writing, so firmly grounded in the regenerative gifting cycle of love for the other.



Notes

¹The five Miksang (contemplative photography) images in this introduction are the artwork of Susan Walsh, who has been studying and practicing Miksang as a contemplative art practice for five years. Each of these photos was taken in downtown Toronto during walks with friends and colleagues during the 2017 Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) conference, of which the ARTS pre-conference was a part. Miksang is but one example of the rich array of contemplative arts that were explored in collaborative ways during the pre-conference retreat.

²A gift-giving paradigm flourished (and still does today in some communities) in pre-colonial contact in the Americas in Indigenous communities worldwide (Mann, 2000) and in Matriarchal cultures worldwide (Geottner-Abendroth, 2009).

³This descriptive list is taken from hooks (2003, p. 10).

⁴Please see a brief description of the book (Walsh, Bickel, & Leggo, 2015) found on the Routledge publishing webpage <https://www.routledge.com/Arts-based-and-Contemplative-Practices-in-Research-and-Teaching-Honoring/Walsh-Bickel-Leggo/p/book/9780415743877>

“This volume presents a scholarly investigation of the ways educators engage in artistic and contemplative practices – and why this matters in education. Arts-based learning and inquiry can function as a powerful catalyst for change by allowing spiritual practices to be present within educational settings, but too often the relationship between art, education and spirituality is ignored. Exploring artistic disciplines such as dance, drama, visual art, music, and writing, and forms such as writing-witnessing, freestyle rap, queer performative autoethnography, and poetic imagination, this book develops a transformational educational paradigm. Its unique integration of spirituality in and through the arts addresses the contemplative needs of learners and educators in diverse educational and community settings.”

⁵Please see the Introduction to *Arts-Based and Contemplative Practices in Researching and Teaching: Honoring Presence* (Walsh, Bickel, & Leggo, 2015) for a discussion about the series of retreats that facilitated the evolution of the edited collection. The latter process influenced the vision for the pre-conference retreat.

⁶Please see the Introduction to *Arts-Based and Contemplative Practices in Researching and Teaching: Honoring Presence* (Walsh, Bickel, & Leggo, 2015) for a discussion of the peer revision/editing process that facilitated the evolution of the edited collection – and that has influenced our process of editing this two-part special issue of *Artizein*.

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AN OFFERING AND A PRAYER

VICKI KELLY

BIO:

Vicki Kelly is Anishinaabe/Métis, and an Indigenous Scholar in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. She works in the areas of Indigenous Education as well as Art, Environmental, Health and Contemplative Education. Her research focuses are: Indigenous knowledges, pedagogies, cultural resurgence, two-eyed seeing, and education for reconciliation.

Vicki is an artist who plays the Native American Flute; she is a visual artist, Eurythmist/ dancer, and writer. She has completed a two-year traditional apprenticeship at the Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Art as part of her research

into Indigenous Poiesis as a knowledge practice.

Vicki is a movement therapist and visual art therapist who worked in clinics and hospitals in Europe in general medicine and psychiatry. She has taught in Waldorf Education and worked internationally in Camphill Communities for mentally and physically challenged children and adults. Vicki is deeply interested in Indigenous understandings of Health, Wellness and Healing.

Listen to

An Offering and a Prayer

<https://soundcloud.com/user-235458448/a-prayer-and-an-offering>



*Aaniin, Migizi, Eagle, please receive the humble reaching of my prayer
Like sacred smoke rising from sweetgrass and sage within an abalone shell.
Asking, seeking in my speaking for the grace of Gitchi Manitou, the Great Spirit
Ascending aloft, arching airborne by feathering filaments flying forth on faith
Your splendid wingspan spiraling until my song soars, singing on the wafting winds
Only to be released, set free as offering before the colourful countenance of Creation.*

Boozhoo, Aaniin, in Anishinaabemowin the word *Aaniin* is our greeting, acknowledging we are meeting within an ancient sounding multiverse and recognizing that we are on similar learning pathways, journeying to be the best at being human and serving 'All Our Relations.'

I humbly offer this songful prayer as a way of welcome and as an act of reciprocal recognition for the diverse ecologies of place and being gathered here. I raise my hands to you and your lands. It is also an acknowledgment that the sacred space created within this special edition is in service of our collective 'lifting up' and 'honouring of' what it means to be human and a good relative to 'All Our Relations.' I wish to sing and resound with the spirit of our intent to reveal and heal through the embodiment of artistic, contemplative and scholarly practice. I wish to offer up a song that humbly honours what I have witnessed during our gatherings, through the reaching of our learning spirits and the voicing of our strong scholarship forged with courage and fashioned by love. Our creations do indeed offer an alternative acoustic ecology, wholehearted and full-throated singing; they resonate with the polyphonic voicing of Creation. Finally, I wish to celebrate the communal conviction collected here, that rejoices in reverence for life and humbly offers hope.

Chi Miigwech.¹



Notes

¹Notes on the two visual images, “Renditions of Traditional Bentwood Box Designs.” These two Heiltsuk or Haisla Bentwood Box Panels c. 1850-1870 were artistically rendered during my two year apprenticeship in Northwest Coast Art. The apprenticeship process invited us to recreate the work of our master carver instructors or the work of an ancient master artist. It was by following in the footsteps of the artist, through the pedagogy of making and deep contemplative observation, that we learned how to form and fashion from the teachings of our Ancestors. As Dempsey Bob so often told us, we are lifting the culture through the art. As apprentices, we were studying the work of masters and ancestors in order to create and become Indigenous artists. It is a journey of transformation wrought from Indigenous participatory pedagogy and embodied transfiguration.

Two Studies: 42 x 72cm Acrylic on Water colour paper March 2015, Vicki Kelly



HOLDING FAST TO H: RUMINATIONS ON THE ARTS PRECONFERENCE

CARL LEGGO

ABSTRACT:

When Susan, Barbara, Diane, and I began planning for the ARTS Preconference, we quickly decided that the event ought to be different from most conference gatherings. Early on, we suggested that the event ought to be a “happening.” My main way of ruminating, investigating, and questioning is to write poetry. In the process of writing poetry I slow down and linger with memories, experiences, and emotions. In all my writing, I am seeking ways to live with wellness. In poetry I seek new ways of knowing and being and becoming. I write in order to invite conversation about what it means to be human on the earth in the twenty-first century. I write with the hope that others will share their stories, too. I write with the anticipation that we will discover together how to make difficult and critical decisions for living, the kind of decisions that will sustain the ecology of our countless interconnections with all the sentient and non-sentient creation. I write poetry and essays as a way to hold out my hands in both gratitude and invitation, always seeking to make connections, as we learn always to live with courage, spirit, and creativity.

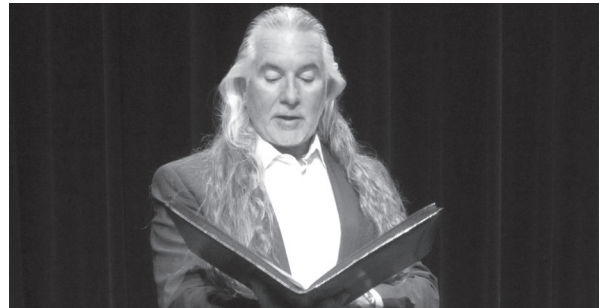


photo by B. Bickel, 2015

BIO:

Carl Leggo is a poet and professor at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. His books include: *Come-By-Chance*; *Lifewriting as Literary Métissage and an Ethos for Our Times* (co-authored with Erika Hasebe-Ludt and Cynthia Chambers); *Creative Expression, Creative Education* (co-edited with Robert Kelly); *Sailing in a Concrete Boat*; *Arresting Hope: Prisons That Heal* (co-edited with Ruth Martin, Mo Korchinski, and Lynn Fels); *Arts-based and Contemplative Practices in Research and Teaching: Honoring Presence* (co-edited with Susan Walsh and Barbara Bickel); *Hearing Echoes* (co-authored with Renee Norman); and *Poetic inquiry: Enchantment of Place* (co-edited with Pauline Sameshima, Alexandra Fidyk, and Kedrick James).

Like bpNichol, the Canadian writer, poet, and editor, one of my favourite letters of the Alphabet is H. After bpNichol died at the age of forty-four, George Bowering and Michael Ondaatje (1994) edited a collection of Nichol’s writing titled *An H in the heart: bpNichol: A reader*. It remains one of my favourite collections of poetry. I especially like the notion of “an H in the heart.” When Susan, Barbara, Diane, and I began planning for the ARTS Preconference, we quickly decided that the event ought to be different from most conference gatherings. Early on, we suggested that the event ought to be a “happening.” Barbara recommended that we read Susan Sontag’s (1966) “Happenings: An art of radical juxtaposition” where Sontag explains:

There has appeared in New York recently a new, and still esoteric, genre of spectacle. At first sight apparently a cross between art exhibit and theatrical performance, these events have been given the modest and somewhat teasing name of ‘Happenings.’ (n.p.)

I have known Susan, Barbara, and Diane for a long time, and I have learned to trust them with my whole heart and imagination. So, when we began discussing a preconference like a “happening,” I was enthused with the promise of creating an event that would be different from most conference experiences. I know how Susan, Barbara, and Diane always live with courage, spirit, and creativity. I have learned from them in countless ways, and I was eager to continue learning, as in the following poem:

Perplexing Pedagogy: Pensées

if lost in mystery
something emerges

a time you learned something almost
always begins with letting go

at the end of the day, writing is about desire
the heart, breathing and not breathing

I will learn to live attentively in tentative times
I will learn to live the tenuous in tensile times

under the sky where possibilities defy calculus
I am a radical rooted in earth, heart, and wind

I attend to the familiar with unfamiliar words
I attend to the unfamiliar with familiar words

if we don't see the value in our lived stories
we won't see the value in others' stories

seek words infused with the heart's rhythms
efficacious, capacious, effervescent words

I come alive in my writing where
I see, hear, know promises

no day is complete without
reading and writing poetry!

I am in process
I am content

I will shape my rumination about the ARTS Preconference around a series of H words,
holding the H in the heart, inviting you to hold the H in your hearts.

The first H-word is: Hole

A while ago, Erika Hasebe-Ludt invited me to walk with her in the neighbourhood of Triumph Street in Vancouver where Ted T. Aoki lived for a while during his adolescence. I met Erika in the neighbourhood, and we walked to the site of the Aoki house. Ted's father ran a language school in the building, and the family lived in the house. When we arrived, we were surprised to find a hole. An excavation team had destroyed the building and dug a big hole in order to prepare for the expansion of the craft brewery that is next door. So, while we anticipated seeing the home where Ted T. Aoki and his family once lived, we found instead a big hole. We were reminded how we still feel a hole in our hearts because Ted is no longer with us.

Vowels (for Ted T. Aoki)

*with Ted I walk in the moment,
a tangled line of metonymic moments,
making the momentous story
where moments are still and eternal*

always in motion, he lingers long
in locations where he stands steady,
sturdy, in the dizzy, always
shape-shifting landscape of holes
like a floating archipelago, best
navigated by memory, and faith
in the mysteries of the alphabet

in his words I am rendered
pneumatic, with feet dangling
in both the earth and the heart's
imagining of poetic possibilities,
still waiting for names

he holds the vowels that breathe
life in our consonants, constantly
ready to know the *I* in our writing,
the metonymic wildness of *I*

he knows the messy texture
of lived experiences, and follows
the line of discipline to know
the oblique, porous, capacious
line that is no line

Ted lives in language, and
language lives in Ted,
drawing us to see what we
overlook, focuses attention
on tension, both tending
and attending, throwing out
lines, here and there, enamoured
with the fecundity of conjunctions

reminds us that grammar, the letter,
the law are chimerical, even comical,
like an alchemist of gramarye,
transforms stone and water
into pigments for re-presenting
the world in words, always
both familiar and unfamiliar,
a seer who teaches us to see

*with Ted I walk in the moment,
a tangled line of metonymic moments,
making the momentous story
where moments are still and eternal*

The second H-word is: Hope

Like Herbert Kohl (1998), I am a hope-monger. After being diagnosed with cancer, my brother Rick died last summer. He was 62 years old. I wrote a paper titled "The faces of love: The curriculum of loss." One peer reviewer wrote that the paper was "sentimental and self-indulgent." How could it be any thing else? We shouldn't write about personal experiences!? Years ago, I read Jane Tompkins' (1987) "Me and my shadow," and her essay changed my life. Tompkins writes:

Well, I'm tired of the conventions that keep discussions of epistemology, or James Joyce, segregated from meditations on what is happening outside my window or inside my heart. The public-private dichotomy, which is to say the public-private hierarchy, is a founding condition of female oppression. I say to hell with it. The reason I feel embarrassed at my own attempts to speak personally in a professional context is that I have been conditioned to feel that way. That's all there is to it. (p. 169)

Inspired by Tompkins, I have collaborated with women all my academic life. In recent years I have worked with many women who are promoting health and education for women with incarceration experience. In 2014, Ruth Martin, Mo Korchinski, Lynn Fels, and I co-edited *Arresting hope: Women taking action in prison health inside out*. We are currently completing a companion book titled *Releasing hope: Women's stories of transition from prison to commu-*

nity. As women were released from prison, they were asked, “What would you like people to know that would be helpful for women being released?” I composed the following two found poems out of their responses.

We’re Human

We’re all human
We’re only human

We aren’t bad people
We just made mistakes

We all make mistakes
We just made bad choices

We are trying to change
We deserve a second chance

We need help getting back on our feet
We deserve a chance to get things right

We are broken, struggling, wounded
We can be fixed with love and support

And they were asked, “What are you feeling most hopeful about?”

I Am Hopeful About

everything:

changing
being free
being happy
finding a job
being a mom
losing weight
going to college
doing things right
getting on my feet
getting healthy again
beginning a new life
getting my life on track
having a life without drugs
learning more about spirituality
working things out with my family

moving forward with my life
putting my record behind me
regaining my husband's trust
keeping my shit together
maintaining a steady life
staying out of jail
living a good life
taking care of me
supporting peers
taking initiative
being content
staying clean

everything:

The third H-Word is: Heart

The human heart beats anywhere from fifty to one hundred times per minute. On average, the human heart beats seventy-two times in a minute. My goal is to help generate a conversation. I am not trying to convince anyone about anything. I am the host of a gathering who invites others. I am promoting connections between poetic knowing and research in the social sciences. I am promoting a poetics of research by promoting poetic ways of knowing. I extend an invitation to readers to listen for the call, to hear their hearts, to hear the hearts of others beating with poetic rhythms.

My main way of ruminating, investigating, and questioning is to write poetry. In the process of writing poetry I slow down and linger with memories, experiences, and emotions. In all my writing, I am seeking ways to live with wellness. We need poetry because poets engage with Ted T. Aoki's (1993/2005) "playful singing in the midst of life" (p. 282). Poets are always attending to the alphabet, grammar, spelling, music, and imagery, as well as the keen intersections of the mind, heart, imagination, and memory. As Jane Hirshfield (1997) claims, poetry brings "new spiritual and emotional and ethical understandings, new ways of seeing, new tools of knowledge" (p. 79). In poetry I seek new ways of knowing and being and becoming.

According to Mary Oliver (1994), "poetry is one of the ancient arts, and it began, as did all the fine arts, within the original wilderness of the earth" (p. 106). I write poetry because I need to know I am connected to the earth. As Oliver understands, poetry "began through the process of seeing, and feeling, and hearing, and smelling, and touching, and then remembering—I mean *remembering in words*—what these perceptual experiences were like" (p. 106). The poet's calling is "to describe the endless invisible fears and desires of our inner lives" (p. 106). As a poet I am always attending to experiences, and I am always seeking to translate and interpret the experiences in ways that help me live with wellness in the world.

I write in order to invite conversation about what it means to be human on the earth in the

twenty-first century. I write with the hope that others will share their stories, too. I write with the anticipation that we will discover together how to make difficult and critical decisions for living, the kind of decisions that will sustain the ecology of our countless interconnections with all the sentient and non-sentient creation. I write poetry and essays as a way to hold out my hands in both gratitude and invitation, always seeking to make connections.

Mary Oliver is my favourite poet. When she died with lymphoma on January 17, 2019, at the age of 83 years, I knew that no poet has ever touched me more. She has both shaken and stirred my spirit and imagination. No other poet has ever spoken in the ways that she has spoken. I have been reading and citing Mary Oliver for many years. I am glad that Mary Oliver lived till 83, and that she continued to write her wonderful poetry until the end. I, too, am living with lymphoma. Right now, I dwell daily in the space between living and dying, and poetry holds me fast. Matthew Zapruder (2017) claims that “maybe poems are not to be read for their great answers, but for their great, more often than not unanswerable, questions” (p. 107). I draw this rumination to a close with a final poem composed of fragments that are hopefully inviting and open-ended. I am always seeking a “happening” in my poetry. I am less concerned about being successful than I am about trusting the process. Susan, Barbara, Diane, and I trusted the process of planning the ARTS Preconference, and the happening that emerged on that delightfully memorable Saturday will remain with us as a celebration of many H words, including hole, hope, and heart. As Mary Oliver (1992) once wrote: “We hope for magic; mystery endures” (p. 240).

Apples

1

my granddaughters all love apples

Ambrosia Autumn Gold
Braeburn Cripps Fuji
Gala Granny Smith Grove
Gravenstein Honeycrisp
Jazz McIntosh Nicola
Pink Lady Red Delicious
Spartan Sunrise Tuscan

they don't need names

they love all apples

I hope they write poetry

2

what would the world be like
if poets departed with their poetry?

3

poets seek creative living
at least some poets some of the time

4

how can poetry speak about poverty?

5

poems suffused with enough wisdom
to shape a whole life, full of wonder

6

I look for poets on TV, & in newspapers,
Hollywood films, and airport bookstores

where are the poets?

7

poetry is a spiritual practice
akin to prayer, contemplation,
meditation, and silence

8

is anyone reading books any more?
or are we just buying books and pretending
we have read them? what books?

100,000 books are published in English every year

reading 100 books a year, I'll never catch up

time to focus on poetry

9

what might happen if more men

read and wrote and shared poetry?

10

one day a week I will enjoy the peace of a Sabbath
an ancient poetic rhythm as old as creation

11

what if we embraced the poet's penchant for questions,
and challenged the chimera of answers?

12

when refracted in a hopeful light,
everything is poetry

13

what might it be like to live every day
filled with poetry and poetic possibilities?

14

Saturday morning is a poetic space
for remembering the week
that has been and imagining
the week that might be

15

poetry is a way of leaning
into the world with enthusiasm
possessed by words

16

poets cannot be polite

poets must be political

17

like poetry grammar is
a magical evocation of hopeful possibilities

18

no day is complete without reading and writing poetry

19

how is grammar connected
to glamour, magic, alchemy, spells and spelling?

can any of us live without grammar and the spell of poetry?

20

as a poet I contemplate the mysteries of creation
& why I ate the twenty meatball dinner at IKEA last night

21

I will be on vacation in Mexico from April 3 to 17

I will be reading fiction, lying in the sun, writing poetry,
pretending email has never been invented

I wish all of you much wisdom and energy
as you continue to run the university and the universe
in my absence, physical and virtual

22

he was loved by many people
who knew him well
while I linger with
the gaps between chapters
stories bumping into stories
with the clang of loss
a poet's endless knell

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SHARING FOOTPRINTS: DWELLING WITH/IN LOSS

ROBERT CHRISTOPHER NELLIS

ABSTRACT:

This essay explores spaces between—between presence and absence, model and canvas, page and thought. Launching from the cliché that love is blind, the piece reads through Jacques Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind* and its inspirations toward the paintings *The Origin of Painting* by Jean-Baptiste Regnault (1786) and *The Invention of the Art of Drawing* by Joseph-Benoit Suvée (1791) to locate spaces in between, spaces of contingency. The essay advocates not rushing through such spaces, but dwelling there—as sites of contemplation. The work engages in conversation with *Lectio Divina* as articulated by Mesner, Bickel, and Walsh (2015) and follows with some of the author's poems to attempt to evoke a sense of loss as being-with in such contemplation.

BIO:

Robert Christopher Nellis is a continuous faculty member in the Red Deer College School of Education in Alberta, Canada, where he teaches courses in Educational Psychology, Family Studies, Educational Foundations, and Curriculum Studies. He is the author of *Haunting Inquiry: Classic NFB Documentary, Jacques Derrida, and the Curricular Otherwise* (Sense, 2009).

When does a relationship end? When does a sense of togetherness or being with move from presence to absence? And what is the condition of being within that state in between? In this essay, I shall explore these questions through a consideration of Jacques Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind*, through the relationships and resonances between these ideas and the practice of reading—specifically the practice of *Lectio Divina*—and I shall also consider the ways in which creative work takes shape in the space of contemplation through a consideration of my own poetry. I find that kind of space between moves into something like a foreground, and it is in this space—the space of contemplation—that generative creative work arises and springs forth.

Indeed, loss is a complex notion. I think about some of the losses I've experienced in my life—my father, grandparents, friends: losses of relationships, losses of places. In all of these cases, something tangible, something in the world, has left, but my experience of it is always within or of myself. Loss involves both an absence of something but also a presence of a kind of aching or pain within myself. What often remains is a self and life changed.

To be sure, sometimes people think of hierarchies of loss. Some losses seem more legitimate or more worthy of a patina of maturity than others—for instance, the loss of a marriage of several decades, or of a beloved grandparent or caregiver, or even something like the loss of a fortune, loss of an opportunity. It seems we make a judgement about the gravity of our loss based upon the significance of the thing that leaves.

Indeed, just as we often think of a hierarchy of loss, we also think of a hierarchy of loves. Consider the popular distinction between love and infatuation. One often thinks of love as the mature affective condition of a properly grownup relationship. Infatuation on the other hand may describe the immature, albeit sometimes burning attachments between the young. As Robert Sternberg (1988) might say, the kind of love that lacks, say, a genuine and deeper understanding of one's other as well as having the anchoring condition of commitment.

I suppose how one defines love depends upon how one thinks about it, how one *looks* at it. I think that an idea really becomes interesting when you apply it to itself: say, for example, when you apply the values of love to love itself. What do we say? *Love is blind*? How true that may be. As I shall discuss, blindness becomes a condition of love itself. Seeing it depends upon not being able to see it; it comes to offer space between somehow.

Do you know the legend of Kora of Sicyon and the history and cultural legacy of her desire? As per Pliny the Elder's account (Brooklyn Museum, 2018, May 16), she was smitten with a Corinthian youth. Knowing that they were destined to be apart, she reached out one longing-filled hand and delicately traced his shadow with charcoal along the wall before her. His shadow self – not quite him, but only what she could see with the sun behind them both – marked the distance between the person of her beloved and what she could see of him. The story of her love tells of both absence and presence, gingerly travelling and filling the space between her beloved and the etching she leaves on the gritty wall before her.

*When does a relationship end? That final fight? Tears streaming down a hot face:
come back*

that final leaving at the airport

*if I hug you so tightly, maybe something of your imprint, your impress, will remain
with me as the world hurls you far away from me.*

No, the leaving comes much, much before that. One knows the parting will come before it happens. Either one makes up their mind to end the relationship or realizes that the other has done so. It comes while still in the presence of the beloved – one dwells with the loss while still in the presence of the other. This is what Kora did, creating her etching with the other still near her, yet feeling her heart compel her to trace something of his shadow.

And what a long shadow she produced. Her father was Butades, a sculptor. One can't know how he felt for his daughter. We can't know the exact narrative of his motivation, but what we can know is what he is reputed to have done, how he is reputed to have used the skills

of his trade to memorialize the line of his daughter's longing. Perhaps he would have had empathy or some other mixture of feelings as he endeavoured somehow, as it were, to mark her figurative footprint upon the earth, perhaps while it was still warm with the foot that left it, a lingering resonance of life and love for a kind of posterity. He turned the edged line that she had drawn into a textured diorama, bringing forth that thin line of etching into a sculpture hanging up on the wall. This was reputed to be the invention of relief modeling.

This moment has been recorded in paintings including Jean Raoux's *The Origin of Painting*, Jean-Baptiste Regnault's *The Origin of Painting*, Joseph Wright's *The Corinthian Maid*, Joseph-Benoit Suvée's *The Invention of the Art of Drawing*, and Jacopo Benci's *Una Lezione*. Countless viewers have seen this account of love emerging in a moment of blindness, affirming perhaps that love is blind – as also is loss. I would like to consider these notions in conversation with Jacques Derrida's (1993) *Memoirs for the Blind*. This work arises from a 1990 exhibition and catalogue that Derrida curated for the Louvre as the inauguration of its *Parti-pris* series. The first image in his exhibition draws (pun not intended but not denied either) from Regnault's and Suvée's paintings. He considers what it says about "representations" (p. 49) and how it "relates the origin of graphic representation to the absence or invisibility of the model" (p. 49).



Figure 1: Regnault, J-B. (1786). The origin of painting. Wikimedia. Public domain.

I really value the treatment of that moment where she creates the line – not looking at her model, but trying, as it were, to write in a space of loss, a space of without, a space of memory. The moment of inscribing the mark, of creating the work, is imperceptibly bound up with memory. When the artist creates her work, she is not as it were, the model, or the sheet or page or canvas, but somehow imperceptibly between, occupying a rich nonspace. The artist and nonspace merge, and this is the space from which springs forth the act of creation. But it is not simply, mechanically, or crudely coming from her.

Do you remember the movie from the 1980s, *Top Gun*? Of course, it stands as a powerful piece of Reagan era propaganda – a gleaming celebration of militarism. That notwithstanding, there is this great line that I recall from the film. The movie is about the best pilots in the world, all hotshots. Near the beginning, a pilot allows his anxiety to creep in, and he loses his confidence. He loses his connection with the space of his greatest work. Taken by fear, he no longer goes into that space. The pilot turns in his wings and resigns from flight, because he’s “holding on too tight” (Simpson, Bruckheimer, & Scott, 1986). I like that because it says something about the way to consider this nonspace. You don’t get there by holding on too tight! You don’t get there through crudely building its features as tools. You get there contemplatively.

Toward an exploration of this, I consider the title of Derrida’s work. The translators share, “The French title *Memoires d’aveugle* can be read as both ‘memoirs’ and ‘memories’ of the blind” (p. x). How interesting – a blending in consideration of the common heritage of memoir and memory. Memoir is the writing of one’s memories: it draws productively on all the instability and generativity of memory. In the writing of one’s memoirs, memory becomes creative work. This is not memory as bringing forward and capturing some discreet bounded entity, carried forth in perfect integrity. Rather, it is memory and creation as an unfolding. Writing as a righting. But not righting by imposing objectivity, privilege, or power; rather righting as making right through a kind of alignment between one’s self and the stories one tells of oneself. It is not a “right angle” geometrically, in the sense of producing an objective measure, but right angling, perhaps like fishing through a murky past, where the line one drops in becomes infused with the line one produces.

Kora’s inscription in the mark on the wall as she traces the shadow of her love becomes in a sense



Figure 2. Suvée, J-B. (1791). The invention of the art of drawing. Wikimedia. Public domain.

a memoir, an effort to claim something for posterity, and also an inscription of memory. The shadow itself projects an echo of a moment past. It is a mingling of the sun behind the youth and Kora herself, and it shines as a new inscription upon the wall before her. The trace she creates is an act of both memory and writing memoir, a meeting of the light, the figure of the love, and the way in which she sees it herself.

Memory is deeply involved in the process of painting. Memory becomes a condition of drawing, inaugurating a kind of blindness as the source of creativity. When one paints a model, one paints without realizing it from memory. The artist looks upon the figure—looks, looks, looks—tries to understand the figure, perhaps forming an impression in her mind, and then turns away toward the canvas and tries in some sense to reproduce some semblance of the figure, or at least another figure inspired from it. In either case, the figure upon the canvas becomes a trace of both memoir and memory.

What is that space between the model and the canvas? As I attempt to create, I suppose I am tempted to think of it as a space through which I want to travel as quickly as possible. It is a space I want to shrink as much as I can. It comes to be that space of danger through which I can lose the impression I form.

But what if I didn't rush through it? What if that space was something very much worth dwelling within? Lingering within? What if that space was the space of contemplation and the source of creative work? After all, memoir is not the thing itself. After Borges and Baudrillard (1994), the map is not the world. The memoir is not the thing. Nor is it completely not the thing. The memoir weaves imperceptibly with memory; contemplation provides the space of dwelling within, generation, creation.

I find resonances for this idea not only in the visual but in reading text as well. Do you remember *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert M. Pirsig (1975)? I remember one part where he talks about books that he and his son brought with them on their motorcycle trips. He noted that he would read them differently than others might expect. He would read short passages and savor them in contemplation. I like that.

In this spirit, I think that learning to read, learning to read for yourself, becomes a matter of unlearning to read, unlearning how people would have told you to read. When I was a boy, I think I somehow felt that reading was not something that I did but that it was something that was done to me. It felt as though reading, done properly, had to be an imposition. Sure, I read comic books, collections of Charlie Brown strips, and other books like Henry Huggins, Danny Dunn, and the Great Brain series. But reading, real reading, seemed like something other kids did. It seemed to be something I had to force myself to do. Something I had to take, like medicine—unpleasant but apparently good for me. Reading seemed to be something that one had to do with sweat glistening in salty drops upon one's forehead while staring at the page, forcing eyes along one line to the next—getting to the bottom of the page—what did you just read? Who cares. I love the picture that Pirsig paints instead: one of engaging in dreamy, contemplative conversation with the work.

What about the dreamful reading that is not “reading” at all? What of looking up from the page or screen and dreaming away from it? What about entering into a space of contemplation? This is the rich and fertile nonsoil from which springs creative work. But this creative work arises not from a singular, unitary, integrated subject, but perhaps rather through a connection with something flowing beyond or beneath oneself.

I think the way one thinks about reading becomes an extension of how one thinks about the text. If one thinks about the text as inert, fixed, dead, then reading becomes a process (crudely characterized) of scientific examination; meaning-meeting becomes a process of data collection – observation, prediction, control; if it is something dead, then one must unearth it to find what exactly is buried there.

But what if one thought of the text differently. Pliny the Younger, in his letter to Sura (n.d.), is said to be the initiator of a certain characterization of the ghost story – the ghost, the figure that returns to haunt and trouble those remaining and walking upon the earth, to haunt the comfort of their still nights and trouble them with an awareness they might not have recognized (Nellis, 2009). It lets them know that something has happened in the past, and though one may be done with the past, that does not mean it is done with them: the figure of the ghost hauntingly returns to show where the bones are buried. If we think about the text this way it becomes not completely dead, as it were, but both living and dead: one engages it in conversation by attending to the ghosts and spirits that arise in and around it. Reading becomes not drilling down into the reductive features but an encounter and conversation with something living.

Such kinds of reading have a long tradition. *Lectio Divina* is a practice coming from Christian communities often thought of as embodying four phases: read, meditate, pray, contemplate (Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, 2018, May 17). It seems to me that this suggests that reading is not simply boring down upon the page in a way that only sees the page as something to be strip-mined, but rather a launching place for flights of exploration and connection beyond it. Reading becomes not the work of the detective – drilling down to the one solution – but of the artist, opening up toward generative possibilities.

It is in such a spirit that I find the invocation of *Lectio Divina* by Mesner, Bickel, & Walsh (2015) in *Arts-Based and Contemplative Practices in Research and Teaching: Honoring Presence* (Walsh, Bickel, & Leggo, 2015). They take it up as a practice/possibility for offering spaces between pieces to weave the overall collection together and open towards considerations of generative emergence. They take the practice up, not reductively or necessarily aligned with any particular tradition, but rather with a spirit of openness. They employ it as a “contemplative path into reflection on a text” (p. 20). Drawing from Paintner’s *Lectio Divina: The Sacred Heart: Transforming Words and Images into Heart-Centered Prayer* (2011), they mobilize the idea as follows:

Reading 1: *Lectio* (“settling and shimmering”) We invite you to sit with the text in silence and to simply let it sink in.

Reading 2: *Meditatio* (“savoring and stirring”) What word/ phrase or aspect of the image stands out to you? Try to let this word/ phrase or aspect of the image simply emerge organically.

Reading 3: *Oratio* (“slowing and stilling”) What is particularly evocative or resonant to you in this text?

Reading 4: *Contemplatio* (“summoning and serving”) What is a call to action that you hear in this text? (p. 20)

This is a deep, deep reading. This is reading the text but also reading beyond the text. This is reading where, in a sense, one is not looking at the text anymore. One is seeing the text so clearly that you no longer see just it – one is entering into a space of a kind of blindness.

You are also allowing the text to see you. This reading emanates from a certain spirit of *Lectio Divina*, whereby the reader is seen by God. Perhaps in a space of seeing neither solely the text nor completely myself, I can catch sight of what is unseen there. Not only do I catch sight of what sees me, of what I call upon, but also the “unexpected stranger that calls” (Fels, 2015, p. 112) me in turn. I think of this unexpected stranger that calls as the figure of haunting and Haunting Inquiry (Nellis, 2009).

The space where this kind of perception occurs exists between the model and the canvas, between the reader and the text; it emerges from neither one nor the other, but productively develops from both. Indeed, this space maps a movement beyond binarism. Carl Leggo shares his recollected wisdom from his mentor and teacher Ted Aoki: “As a colleague of Aoki’s I know that he was always challenging binary oppositions, always asking questions. Aoki (1993a/2005) promoted the ‘place named and, a place of lived tension between this and that’ ” (Leggo, 2015). Seeing beyond the cruelly reductive, empirical, binaristic relationship between reader and page, model and canvas in a sense of fixedness. I prefer Leggo’s image of a moving sea, the “Caribbean / never still” (p. 143), as a condition of “living poetically” (p. 145). How does one approach such shifting seas of an ever-in-between? What is the condition of doing so? Indeed, Leggo confirms that for him he does so as a way of “remembering” (p. 153). In my own modest way, I draw inspiration from these sentiments as a way of considering my own creative work. And I seek to do so not holding too tightly but holding gently, in a sense becoming in-tune with the way that I too am held – not to be forced or compelled but invited and supported in telling a story, “engaging in a conversation” (p. 154).

So, how do I engage in conversation as a way of imagining a contemplative arts practice? I do so through immediately and imminently commingling between the three terms – contemplative + arts + practice – but not crudely, not quantitatively, as in simply “more of.” I do not imagine the notions as somehow climbing higher and higher, ideas stacking one upon the other, but rather as sliding into each other, mingling together in common space. For me, in this sense, contemplation becomes a bringing together of con (“together with”) and temp (“time”), a coming together in the same time, a mingling of many with the footprints of one.

I would like to share some work here – three poems – that try to explore this. The poems deal with loss. Through the work, I feel and hope to convey a sense of bringing together loss with life, subtraction with generation. That which is lost, removed, displaced, becomes perhaps re-placed: re-placed in the sense of moved to a different location and also replaced in the sense of returned: taking a hand, mingling in mourning, stepping together and sharing a path.

Griesbach, Edmonton, Alberta, 1941 –

*It's only by our lack of ghosts we're
haunted.*

Earle Birney

I guess this land is too valuable
to just leave
the way it was since the 1950s –

quiet, faded fields,
now torn up and in-filled
with condos and townhouses,

the old roads cut into
with jet black pavement,
if not torn up and re-gridded,

a few curious,
crumbling curbs
left looking on,

a bluff of woods razed
down to a stubble
of shrubs,
in exposed humility,

a single
red brick building
standing
from the old neighborhood.

Do stories need tellers
to live, or
can they breathe on their own
in the still air,

holding their secrets?

Contrary to popular belief,
the main occupation
of ghosts
is not haunting, conjuring frights,
but

long

lonely

waiting



Figure 3: Nellis, R. (2011). Danger keep out. Digital photograph.

Shannon Park, Nova Scotia

today, I shimmy up that pipe and carefully crawl through the window,
my foot crunching remnants of broken glass long resting on the tile floor inside

I can see children playing, caught in just-hinted shimmers
of shiny linoleum, smelling of Pine-Sol,

the thud of a baseball hitting the front of the building
“What the hell are you kids doing!”

the more delicate my steps, the deeper the echoes
through this decay, like those pots and tables in Pompeii

untouched by human hands
but changed nonetheless

through the rooms and into the stairwell, piled with 20 years of excrement
if no sign of birds

I step up the stairs to our old 4th floor apartment

The only locked door in the complex

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PERFORMING RESEARCH: CONTEMPLATING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A 'MAN'

GEORGE BELLIVEAU

ABSTRACT:

Sharing research in performative modes opens new possibilities for meaning making. This article offers a monologue that explores my experience of working on a theatre project with military veterans. The impact of working on the creative process with veterans inspired this performed piece, and provided an opportunity to contemplate what it means to be a 'man' in today's society. The article first situates performed research within current arts-based literature prior to sharing the creative piece, which is at the heart of this offering. The piece then concludes with how performed research opens the possibility for different forms of engagement and reflection for audiences.

BIO:

George Belliveau is Professor of theatre education at the University of British Columbia, Canada. His research focuses on research-based theatre and performed research. He has published extensively in the areas of theatre & drama education and arts-based research. His latest co-edited book *Research-based Theatre: An Artistic Methodology* (Intellect, 2016) explores a variety of international projects that use theatre to examine social issues. He is a professionally trained actor, and has participated in over 100 theatre productions as an actor, director, or playwright. His recent piece *Contact!Unload*, co-developed with military veterans, artists and counselors, has been performed for a variety of audiences, including politicians at Canada's Parliament in Ottawa and for Prince Harry in London, UK. He has received a number of awards for his scholarship and was recently inducted into the College of the Royal Society of Canada (2017).

Good critical arts-based research grasps our imaginations, grabs a hold of our souls, and unabashedly strives to affect our very ways of living, being and co-being ... [and is] deliberately transformative and inspires us to reflection ...

- Susan Finley, 2014, p. 531

As arts-based researchers we thrive to *inspire* and *grab hold of souls*, and we do so through the playful weaving of text, body, and *spirit* within our diverse artistic practices. This spirit often rests within complex relationships that unfold amidst the colour and movement of the research experience (Douglas & Carless, 2013). As an artist-researcher, I pay close attention to this spirit and am "present to the possibilities and potentialities that exist at the intersections of the artistic and contemplative" (Walsh, Bickel, & Leggo, 2015, p. 1).

Peter Brook's (1968) influential work in the theatre emphasizes how the artist must keep the art-making buoyant and alive, for when we cease to do so, it turns into the *deadly theatre*. According to Brook, theatre that relies too heavily on being complete or set loses its vitality. The dramatic monologue I share below represents my quest to show the ongoing impact of a collaborative theatre-based project. Based on a four-year initiative where I worked closely with counselors and returning military veterans (Belliveau, 2017; Lea, Belliveau & Westwood, 2018), the monologue explores how the theatre collaboration continues to live inside

me and to influence who I am as an artist-researcher and human being.

In developing the monologue, I reached beyond the intellectual and aimed to offer a visceral depiction of my discoveries. Through the physical and poetic, I aimed to translate and expand academic understandings to include embodied and artistic ways of knowing. The affordances of arts-infused forms of contemplation are that they provide the possibility to explore what we don't know that we don't know. Working within performative modes of inquiry, such as monologues, can often surprise and spark artist-researchers towards new insights. As Philip Gerard (2017) describes, "It's the *not* knowing that always gets me, the surprise waiting at the end of the road" (p. xii).

The reflective and creative writing process allowed space for learning moments that I didn't know I had experienced during the veterans project. Engaging with a poetic monologue through body and voice pushed me to uncover and reveal moments I had been previously unable to articulate or identify, similar to Lyotard's (1992) notion of the "unthought," where things are muddled up, and we try to make sense of it all through a creative process (p. 103). Rehearsing the monologue and putting it on its feet offered further opportunities to understand, feel, and appreciate the impact of this work with new lenses (Belliveau, 2015a).

What does it mean to be a 'man'

As a father of two girls, a husband, a son, a brother, and most recently working with military men, I have been wondering what it means to be a man?

*What does it mean to be a successful, decent man?
Who are our models? Who are your models?*

*For the first two decades of my life I identified as a hockey player.
In the dressing room, I was surrounded by hyper-masculinity.
On the ice, it was about being tough and strong in a fast, physical game with other men.
I dreamed of being a goalie in the NHL.
I wanted to be Ken Dryden, because he was an athlete and a scholar.*

Well, I didn't make it to the NHL, but I managed to play at the University level, where I traveled from hockey to theatre dressing room while majoring in Acting at Dalhousie University.

*At the age of 18, as I made my way between those two drastically different worlds, I realized there was a spectrum of men, and how performing masculinity is part of a continuum.
I enjoyed the camaraderie of my hockey teammates,
But with my male acting friends I felt more alive.
I explored parts of myself that I never knew existed – as they were locked up, hidden.
I expanded my range, I felt more complete in the theatre.*

So, in second year university I decided to hang up my hockey gear and commit myself fully to theatre.

Much to my father's surprise ... and I suspect chagrin.

My brother Don got it, because at that point in his life he put aside weight lifting and football to seek a more spiritual pathway by mountain climbing, from the Canadian Rockies to the Himalayas.

But dad, well ...

To be a man is to play hockey.

To be a man is to be strong, tough, and reserve one's emotions.

To be a man is not to open oneself up and be vulnerable in front of others.

I now work with military veterans, men in particular, who were deployed overseas by the Canadian Forces to be peacekeepers, to protect innocent civilians caught in warfare.

These men, who risk their lives to safeguard the wellbeing of others, represent for many of us the epitome of being a man.

In my three years of working with these veterans

I have come to recognize the layers and levels of what it means to be a man.

Being a man goes much deeper than the bravado, the uniform, and physical strength.

These men I work with have faced moral and psychological injuries that most of us will never encounter.

Imagine ... deciding if you should shoot a six-year-old Afghan boy who is walking alone towards your compound, because he might be carrying explosive devices?

Or ... holding on to your mate's shrapnel-filled body, as he takes in his last breath ... then a few weeks later having to let his parents know that at 19 ... their son was mature beyond his years.

The veterans I work with have journeyed from war zones to counseling support, and now theatre where they perform their lived experiences of Afghanistan in our play called Contact!Unload.

The play depicts their authentic stories of loss, survivor's guilt, but it also shows the camaraderie and brotherhood, as they find ways within the group to heal, to cope, to reclaim parts of their souls.

Souls that were fractured, or left overseas.

As one of the vets says: "You gotta die when you join, so you don't fear dying when you're there."

The challenge is when you come back, it's not easy to reclaim your life.

"Nothing's the same here.

*Nothing makes sense.
When I was there I was something.
When I'm here I'm just dead inside."*

*Our theatre piece shows the hurt, pain, the inner struggles.
But it also brings to life pathways towards healing, towards recovery.*

*The scars remain, yet ways of dealing and coping emerge as the play unfolds.
It's about transitioning, reclaiming, confronting the past to move forward.*

*Theatre allows us to juxtapose past and present, bringing to light a change
process in front of our eyes.
In Contact! Unload we witness hyper-masculine men, initially defying any kind of
support.
"I'm fucked up, but not that fucked up."
Or, "there are guys that are way worse than I am."*

*With persistent persuasion from fellow vets, they eventually seek professional
support, and open up in an attempt to literally save their lives.*

*In getting to know these veterans, by working closely with them in rehearsals, I
... was in awe ... witnessing another definition of courage.*

*Courage to be vulnerable, courage to share their humanity, honesty, as right in
front of me they re-lived their trauma, opening up their shattered souls ... then,
painfully, courageously worked at stitching the broken pieces back together, so
they could live more fully.*

So, what does it mean to be a man? A father? A son? A brother?

*I never served in the military, so what did I really know about their trauma?
The only weapon I ever held was a prop, a wooden sword in a Shakespeare battle
scene.
And I guess a hockey stick ... but something was happening inside me, as I
watched them first hand rebuild themselves, reclaim their souls, in the company of
their brothers.
I realized that I was grappling with my own identity, as a male, as a father, a son.*

*My dad grew up on a farm; he was a hockey player, a boxer, a weightlifter.
At age 18, he could bench press nearly 300 pounds (that's twice my weight!)
Dad's now 74, and when we move furniture, he still picks up the heavy end.
Though, when Dad was 49, the age I am now, he lost a son, my brother, Don, in a
tragic mountain climbing accident.
I was 27, and I had no idea how to grieve for my only brother, a best friend.
My father, in his quiet way, showed me another way to be strong.
He stood beside me, and with compassion, we grieved and cried together.*

Releasing, and sharing the burden of our deep loss.

*Never alone, never alone – that’s the motto for the veterans I work with.
I have your back.
On the battlefield, and at home.*

My dad saw the production of Contact!Unload, and like many other men (and women) in attendance, his eyes were filled with tears during the curtain call as these soldiers stood side by side, hugging, singing “Lean on Me.”

*Men do cry,
And they laugh.
In fact, they have the spectrum of emotions at their disposal.
They just need the courage to act upon and release these emotions.
So, what does it mean to be a man?
It’s being true ... to yourself and those around you.*

The monologue purposefully shifts from past to present, personal to public, never settling on time or place for very long. In offering only brief descriptive moments, audiences are given the chance to imagine and complete the narrative for themselves. Spiraling within the text and performance is a purposely built-in rhythm or interplay between the inner and outer world. This creative space invites audiences to enter the narrative with their own story, their own quest for understanding. Therefore the experience for the audience is to first witness the meaning making that I encountered in working closely with the veterans, followed with an opportunity to contemplate their own lived experiences of loss and trauma. As the monologue shifts between the stories of veterans and my lived experience, a porous space is generated for witnesses to imaginatively insert and/or contemplate their own narratives. This offering or gifting (Lea, 2014) allows for stories to live on, transform, and take on new meanings for the receivers, thus maintaining Brook’s notion of vitality, and the concept of being *present* with stories, which characterizes a key concept of arts-based and contemplative practices. However, the present never stands still. It is always alive, in flux, in transformation. We are constantly in the midst of a journey, while yearning to hold on to, or make sense of, an ephemeral present.

In contemplating her theatre monologues around identity and being present, artist-researcher Margi Brown Ash (2018) suggests that performing “stories have the power to change how we are in the world” (p. 5). Through the act of performing one’s research, in lifting it off the page into a three-dimensional space, Brown Ash adds that we

inspire, contextualise, and embody the stories being told and in so doing connect in multiple ways to the audience. Just as the shaman bridges the gap between soul and earth, so the performer journeys on behalf of their audience, towards an embodied, emotional, and empathic understanding of what it is to be human. (p. 5)

Irish playwright Oscar Wilde regarded theatre as “the greatest of all art forms, the most

immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being" (quoted in Ellmann, 1988, p. 111). When sharing performance-based research, one hopes to inspire and awaken the audience, so that they leave the space more alive and present than when they entered. To date, the monologue "What does it mean to be a 'man' " has been performed for over a thousand people at four public events. Anecdotal feedback after performances, along with written messages, suggest the monologue has struck a chord with audiences and enabled them to reflect on their lives. Written comments include, "heartwarming," "authentic, beautifully honest," "all men need to see this, so they can connect to their emotions," "spoke directly to my losses in life, yet in a hopeful way."

As an artist-researcher, I keep striving to bring scholarly and artistic understandings to my work in an attempt to *inspire*, and *grab hold of souls* through forms of public engagement and monologues:

In my academic, researcher role I strive for clarity. I aim to persuade through argument, provide evidence and support. I anchor my work in ongoing debates, theories, methodologies, ideally contributing new knowledge.

*When performing I layer, complicate, I get partially lost, in the world of the drama. I'm in the moment, prepared spontaneity. Hamlet-like I ponder, contemplate, debate with myself. I raise the stakes, make the problem colossal yet minute, worldly yet personal. I'm here **and** there.*

My academic side troubles, makes stabs, seeks truth, considers the literature, the field. I strive to say something new.

I strive to be physically and emotionally present, fully alive, awake. To dream.

I observe, analyze, synthesize. I study the trees and seek to organize them in some coherent or artful forest.

I walk in the forest. I'm part of the forest, touch the trees, smell nature, breathe in the colours.

I climb the trees for a better view, dwell in the forest. Amidst the doing I begin to paint meanings. Sketches, blotches in time.

Time and space are transformed, intensified. I'm here and there.

There, in the myriads of strands, I capture, no, I create meaning through prose.

And poetry. It's this and that.

I write. I re-write.

I create. I re-create.

I generate.

I present.

I perform.

(Belliveau, 2015b, p. 3)

Notes

¹Watch the monologue at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogIhkBI94Yg>

²The events include: Vancouver Public Salon, Vancouver Playhouse, BC (Nov. 2017); The Flame storytelling, Bistro Cottage, Vancouver, BC (May 2017); *Contact!Unload* Symposium, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC (May 2017); Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, Vancouver, BC (March 2017).

³Used with permission from individuals who sent personal comments via e-mail or text.

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LOOKING FOR WATER STORIES

JANICE SANTOS VALDEZ

ABSTRACT AND INTRODUCTION:

As an immigrant settler, I contemplate my role as witness and participant in relation to water and First Nations people, who, for many generations, have been guardians of the ecosystems where I live. The poem I offer here is a reflection and response to my experience of witnessing a First Nations community during a consultation on the topic of water treatment systems with the engineering initiative *Res' Eau*. My poem, *Looking for Water Stories*, contemplates a relationship to water and humanity through physical, socio-cultural, historical and spiritual perceptions. The poem is the form which my field notes took on spontaneously whilst listening to community members share their stories about water. My intent with this contribution is to offer insights about the experience of witnessing in role as an artist-researcher within an interdisciplinary research project. Through the back and forth of listening and writing

in the present moment as stories were shared, this poem expresses the rhythm of present moments captured and the memory of them revisited. My observations took on a poetic responsiveness that I would not have otherwise been able to express as a silent witness, and this expression of my witnessing holds in its creative process a deep contemplative practice with community.

BIO:

Janice was born in the Philippines and grew up in Kitimat, British Columbia, Canada. As a PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Education at UBC and a new mom, Janice's research is exploring what it means to witness stories as an artist-researcher with a Filipino-Canadian lens. The heart of her dissertation will take form as an auto-ethnographic performance in response to an arts-based creation process with migrants in Metro Vancouver.

Looking for Water Stories

I have to go pee
We're here. There it is.
No, it's locked.
Gas. Coffee. Shop.
Do you have a toilet I can use?
5 bucks! Oh, I don't have that.
You'll have to work it off.
Okay, I can work.

Sprinklers dancing upon peaceful green
Longhouse door, heavy
Opens to a hum of quiet
Sweet smell of cedar
embraces, warms me
Each breath in,
air of sacred

Air of ancestry,
air of anticipation
What might we discover today, together?
Together. Nothing is too big.
Tubig - "water" in Tagalog
language of a land cradled and

broken
by water
the mother tongue of the Philippines
my birthplace, the motherland of our family and
not a place I know well, but one I come from

Not a name I wanted, but one I got
a trickster teaching transformations
My mother passed away talking about water.

She had a stroke. Our Mother.
Stroke of wisdom – “Why are you asking me?
Water is important for everyone.”
And people are still fighting.

Six months to get a bucket of paint
Get support
A purpose to lead
Mothers and children and their children
Like the picture you took of the family
That doesn't capture you
You were operating the instrument of care.

Three rivers and a song of universal purpose
used by every Nation
no singular ownership
Water – given by Creator
For universal purpose
Used by everyone, in everyone,
Everyone brought into this world by water.

Opening a new door to sacred water
Treat it with respect
We are sacred water
Listen with respect
Pick an elder
 Ask them what they want
 Ask them what they know
 What they wonder about, for the wonderment of childhood

Prayers. Water. Prayers. Water
 Be in a spiritual way
Say prayers to the water
Water is spiritual
We are spiritual
 We are water
 A poem as prayer
 to the water in you and me.

The World
 Water.
 We want
 Water
to
 Be



“BORN DIFFERENT, BUT STILL THE SAME”

MY JOURNEY AS A SIBLING OF PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES IN AN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

ANNEMARIE CUCULIZA-BRUNKE

ABSTRACT:

This article is an autobiographical exploration of the author’s experience as a younger sibling of two people with a cognitive disability. It comprises nine years of conscious self-work and shows how an academic environment can nurture reflection on complex personal issues, and through this reflection, aid in the process of self-discovery and healing. The author explores autobiographical writing and poetic inquiry as a method to develop witnessing consciousness. The purpose of this piece is to contribute to the conversation about the challenges that siblings of people with disabilities face, as much attention is focused upon parents and the people with the disabilities themselves. The author seeks to find ways of sharing her experience and to work with other siblings who have similar life experiences.

BIO:

Annemarie Cuculiza-Brunke is a Peruvian musician, a communicator, and an educator who works in the field of creativity, wellbeing, and social and emotional learning. She holds an MA from the Faculty of Integrated Studies in Education (University of McGill). Currently, she teaches at the Education Faculty of the University of Applied Sciences (UPC), in Lima Peru. She also develops different social projects for public and private organizations. She writes a weekly column about education in a local Peruvian newspaper.

In the Foreword to *Arts-Based and Contemplative Practices in Research and Teaching* (Walsh, Bickel & Leggo, 2015), Pinar (2015) writes that “contemplative practice and research in education acknowledges that reality is a matter of revelation” (p. xv). Even though reality is constantly changing—revealing itself before us—we can engage in practices that enhance our ability to be present. This process of becoming ever more present is at the core of a contemplative educational practice. It also requires us to recognize that “study is the teacher’s way” (Pinar, 2015, p. xvii).

Susan Walsh and Heesoon Bai (2015) explain that, “witness consciousness is the ability of our consciousness to watch and observe in

a non-judgmental way its content and also the process whereby the content, occurring as events, constantly shifts and flows, thus creating a ‘stream of consciousness’” (p. 25). In order to practice witness consciousness, we need to first, feel at ease with our role as witness. How can we become responsible observers? How can we develop witness consciousness in academic environments, and in what ways may it be illuminating for ourselves and others? I’ve found that educators who set the example, creating safe spaces for exploring our autobiographical experiences, generate a movement in their students that leads to surprising outcomes.

Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson set the example for me, in her *Autobiographical Approaches*

to Education course. My experience in autobiography had been confined to psychotherapy. As every person who has attended psychotherapy knows, for the process to be successful, patients need to commit to self-work, inside and outside of the therapy sessions. As a child, I had been trained in music (piano) and also in storytelling. Reading and writing was important in my family, as well as in the school I attended. Therefore, when I started attending therapy as a teenager I was very conscious about how and which methods were helpful in advancing the purpose of the sessions. I had used writing informally as catharsis many times. For many years, I practiced a method that served me well: I wrote in a diary the issues I was working through. After a period of time, generally two months, I'd revise my diary and decide which thoughts and feelings I found valuable. I tore apart the pages that I considered not useful for my wellbeing, and many times burned these pages.

This ritualistic method of self-work had always been in the margins of my formal education. I would have never imagined that "digging up our dandelions" and "taking our love medicine," in Cynthia Chambers' (1998, p. 14) words, in an academic context, would make me continue healing lifelong wounds that resisted becoming painless scars. After more than fifteen years of deep psychotherapy, and having participated in all sorts of energy healing therapies, the last place I was expecting to find restorative practices was in a university course.

Teresa created a safe space where students were nurtured with carefully selected writings, a space that had the potential of removing layers of (un)consciousness, long forgotten (or hidden) aspects in our psyches. Her course combined provocative readings and rich class discussions, where we would

be asked to respond to prompt questions or thoughts. Teresa wrote in her doctoral thesis that she developed her method, called "Bringing Memory Forward," inspired by Gendlin's understanding that "to explicate is always a further process of experience" (as cited in Strong-Wilson, 2003, p. 15). I will always be thankful for Teresa's generosity in creating this course and for the way she accompanied us, as we created short pieces of autobiographical writings.

Thanks to Teresa, who was also my thesis advisor, I've learned that sharing our creative and honest writing with other educators-witnesses, (especially if they are more knowledgeable than us), is fundamentally transformative. If "teaching...has to deal not so much with knowledge as with resistance to knowledge," as Felman (1982) says (as cited in Strong-Wilson, 2003, p. 16), autobiography in education is necessary for the advancement of a pedagogy that continues to grow and learn.

At the Provoking Curriculum Conference (Montreal, 2017) and the ARTS Pre-Conference Retreat at the annual conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) (Toronto, 2017), I met many more wonderful scholars who consciously work to create spaces for mentoring in higher education. I honor and cherish with all my heart the guidance, care, and growth opportunities these scholars provide for students. The caring space of the retreat encouraged me to write this article.

As Susan Walsh and Heesoon Bai (2015) explain, "writing together (collaborative writing) can amplify the witnessing capacity. This is particularly so when our own witnessing capacity is not yet ample and stable, especially when what we need to witness is difficult" (p. 25). In some ways, I feel that

my writing and revising process, over time, has involved a kind of witnessing of myself. Also, the process of creating this paper is, in a way, one of collaborative writing, as I feel held and assisted by Susan Walsh and Barbara Bickel as we advance in the revising and editing process.

In this text, I'd like to share a very personal process that includes poetic and reflective writing regarding my relationship with my two older sisters, Anja and María Pía, both of whom have a cognitive disability. I asked my parents (their legal guardians), for consent on behalf of my sisters to publish this article and the photograph that appears later in the text. My parents have been supportive of the process and granted permission for me to share this experience. When I asked for consent, I learned that they had written an article for the French magazine *Ombres et Lumière*, in 1987, about their experience as parents. When they wrote this article, I was already three years old. My parents' experience was deeply influenced by their faith in God, which is where they found meaning and strength to endure the complexities of having two children with a disability. It was interesting to learn about the ways in which my parents tried to inspire other similar families. In a way, it's what I'm trying to do now, as a sibling.

Growing up with Pia and Anja: Born different, but still the same

I am the youngest of three sisters. My two older siblings were born with a cognitive disability: a syndrome that hasn't been dignified with a name of its own, since it is quite rare worldwide. Fourteen and six years older than me, my encounters with Pia and Anja always confronted me with the meaning of life itself, particularly, the significance of human suffering.

When a child grows up in an unusual environment such as a family with members who have special needs, complex pedagogical moments tend to appear constantly. For example, being in public spaces implies dealing with uncomfortable staring—especially from older people, and also from some adolescents and small babies. Each social event with my family was difficult. It was especially hard and exhausting to sustain the effort of hiding my shame and social anguish.

As I continue in the path to becoming a teacher, I've learned that nurturing consciousness in a child is a delicate matter that requires great "pedagogical tact," as Max Van Manen (2016) explains. In his understanding, a pedagogy of tact requires being sensitive to the intuitive elements present in teaching. It also requires that the teacher develop the ability to recognize events that may mark children deeply, pedagogical moments that imply a *latency*—as they may remain as imprints in the hearts and minds of each person. An important part of tact is knowing that children may hide their true feelings ... or may not even be sure of what their emotions mean.

Children who have siblings with a disability may be sensitive to their parents' suffering and try to avoid causing them further pain. Therefore, they often hide their difficult feelings, such as shame, anger, and guilt, which can lead to stigma and, what is worse, self-imposed stigma. Erving Goffman (2006), in his extensive study about stigma, explains that once stigma is interiorised, the person isolates herself, limiting possibilities for development and wellbeing; before facing rejection, it is "safer" to avoid potential situations that may lead to negative outcomes.

Because of the obvious advantages a normally developing sibling has in comparison to her sibling with a disability, expressing anger is usually a family taboo. Actually, a more tactful pedagogy would find spaces for normally developing siblings to express their difficult emotions, without encouraging abusive behaviour. In time, siblings learn to sublimate and deflect aggression, using it wisely and constructively. Bank and Kahn (1982, p. 199, as cited in Meyer and Vadasy, 2008, p. 15) recommend to view sibling aggression as a “constructive function” that, well guided, may help the normally developing sibling and the sibling with a [disability] to learn to manage and resolve conflicts.”

Reflecting back to my childhood, probably because of the age difference between my sisters and me, and the characteristics of their disability, my feelings of guilt were overwhelming. They were also un-confessable. For example, I remember anger building up inside of me when Anja tried to hit me in her desperation of wanting to do the same things I did: going to the same school, having the same lessons, having the same attention and admiration from my parents. For some years, Anja tried to hit me in the midst of her despair, but never succeeded. This made me feel extremely angry and guilty. Compared to her, I had so many advantages: just by moving a little bit faster I’d avoid any hits. Today, I realize that I would have preferred to receive a slap from Anja, because it would have given me a justification to fight back, to defend myself, and to let out some of the tension boiling up inside of me like a geyser ... even if it were just a scream of help!

I remember as a child trying to work through these moments in different ways: through prayer, by putting my emotions into my pi-

ano playing, in writing stories for children, or just by trying to forget—going back and forth in the garden’s swing. I understood the collage of religion, arts, and intellectuality that my parents wanted to provide for me, as a command that I should not disobey to be “good hearted,” “talented,” and “smart.” As a child, I tried to comply with all of these checks, which I felt were “requests,” and “musts.” At the same time, I felt confused, as I constantly compared myself with my two sisters. It has been in the last months, thanks to the process of writing this article, that I’ve realized that the feeling that I “had” to love my sisters, made it much more difficult for me to accept them as they are, and accept myself, as they are also a part of me.

I’ve learned that by recognizing that love cannot be imposed—by removing the message “you must love”—we may find that we *can* love.

Witnessing surfacing feelings

For most of my life I’ve not known for sure where I belonged. It felt as a betrayal to my family to want to live differently, without the limitations that sharing daily life with people with disabilities imply. This confusion made it very difficult for me to relate to people of my own age who didn’t have a disability. As a child and adolescent, it was very easy for me to be with a group of people with all sorts of disabilities, as well as older people. The problem was that I had no idea how to socialize with people who are not living with disabilities.

What was my role? What was my position in our family? Today I feel that my role is the one of a conscious witness. Life has given me the opportunity to intimately know the challenges people with a cognitive dis-

ability face, as well as their families.

In 2011, I wrote a poem named “Crystal Hearts,” dedicated to my sisters. The poem represents a very important moment in my life, since it is about the time when I started to be able to differentiate myself from my sisters. Until that moment, I was under the emotional impression that my sisters were like a huge backpack that haunted me, but I could not express myself. I didn’t want to accept this feeling, because it meant I had to acknowledge my difficult feelings and experiences.

I remember feeling enormous amounts of emotional pain when I wrote the first version of the poem. After all, it had been twenty-seven years of trying to deny and hide conflicting emotions. Then, in Teresa Strong Wilson’s class in 2016, the last assignment was a creative piece of writing. I chose to revisit “Crystal Hearts.” The writing and revision process has become an ongoing contemplative practice, as I continue exploring my relationship with my sisters, and it has also led me to move forward, as I’m currently creating an arts-based workshop for siblings of people with special needs. As Maxine Greene wrote, when we tap into consciousness and awaken it, “we are breaking through to new horizons of sound and feelings. We are beginning, just beginning, to suspect what still lies beyond” (Greene, 2001, p. 17; as cited in Pinar, 2015, p. xv). From an educational perspective, I began my contemplative writing process in Teresa Strong-Wilson’s class.

To revisit and revise the poem, I read it several times and scratched out the phrases that didn’t resonate within me anymore. I also added some new lines, which are marked in the text. This process was, in some ways, similar to my initial method of writing in a

diary and some months later, deciding what still resonated within me, as I described previously. This process is also a form of the *Lectio Divina* practice Mesner, Bickel, and Walsh (2015) describe, where “one reads aloud a short text four times, each time with a different focus. Traditionally, the process involves reading (*lectio*), meditation (*meditatio*), prayer (*oratio*), and contemplation (*contemplatio*)” (p. 20). However, in this case, the meditation, prayer, and contemplation process has been over a nine-year time frame.

I include my poems and revisions below. After the poems, I respond to my older self with a brief letter to my sisters. To engage in this process, I read each poem several times and wrote down the memories that came to me. Canadian poet Lorna Crozier says that, “memory is not a fixed thing but a process and one that involves at least two parts of you—an older and a younger self” (as cited in Chambers, 1998, p. 13). I invite you to join me, as readers, as conscious witnesses, in this exercise of contemplating my autobiographical process of trying to make sense of my lived experiences with my siblings.

The poem you are about to read was first written in 2011. As noted above, I came back to it in March of 2016, during Teresa’s class. The second version of this poem includes the edited lines of the first version.

Crystal Hearts (2nd version, revised in Teresa Strong-Wilson’s 2016 class)

*For Anja and Pia
My crystal-hearted sisters
For you were sitting on the edge of a star
Contemplating everything that would come
And accepted this strange film
Without losing your smiles.*

Earth can be a terrible place,

But also, wonderful.

You will be pointed out
Because of your differences
And I won't be able to resist
To fall into that trap for many years

I promise,
I will never stop
trying to be a better sister for you

Some will look at you with distrust
And others with joy
For they will recognize you.

**My girls of a strange beauty...
Those who don't know how to look at you,
Are the ones that need you the most.**

~~And the day will come,
where I will not be willing to sit besides you...~~

~~I wish you only knew
That on that day I'll be needing you the most.~~

And yes, the day will come where I will not be willing to sit beside you.
It will be a difficult day, and I will feel my heart break,
But in order to heal
We need to part
And I need to feel I have a (normal) space of my own.

There is still so much I have to learn from you!
From you, Anja; the passion you have for knowledge and your perseverance.
From you, Pia; the loyalty of your affection and your dignity.

I beg for your patience.

It takes a long time for me to learn what *really matters*.

My dear sisters: *extra - ordinary* companions

In you I find the missing piece, the one I thought was long gone, the gear at the heart of my soul:

~~Not accepting your love~~

Not accepting that our love is a difficult one
Is denying myself

Denying myself
Is an act of pure ignorance
That I am so tired of repeating.

I start to understand

~~That it is good to be us three.~~
That it was just the way it was meant to be

I remember the countless hours we passed contemplating the march of the ants
in the garden...The games, the songs, the jokes, and the dances.

I would have loved so much to learn how to braid my hair from you, to have
a long and enlightening conversation about the meaning of life and suffering,
to understand all the words you say, to present you to my friends (without
shame), to be able to bring friends home, to go to the movies, to talk about
boys, to swim in the sea with you...

I would have loved so much to have had a common and regular sisterhood
with you...

~~The discovery of joy beyond all pain.~~

As time goes by
we all get older
it is time to let go from the past
leave the fantasies behind
concentrate in the dreams

For if something could not be in the past
it doesn't mean it can't exist
maybe in another form in the future

Someday I'll experience "regular" sisterhood
through children of my own
through my nieces and nephews
through my students
or social projects
I hope that soon,
life will give me the opportunity to bring some normality to your life as well.

Maybe then, we can shop for some nice clothes
have a lot of ice cream

When that day arrives
I will feel that my mission was accomplished
and that I was a good sister to you.

Annemie, 2016.

Becoming ourselves is a long process, similar to the peeling of an onion. As time passes by, the layers continue falling, and I feel that I see more clearly each day. Somehow, I've stopped asking things I want from life. I find this is not our role. At least not regarding what we cannot change: for example, the past. Today I try to concentrate in finding out what life expects from me. What does this particular experience demand?

How can I better serve my community and become a better version of myself? Again, I am a witness in my family. And I witness myself becoming more honest. Therefore, to close the present article, I chose to write a letter to my sisters, based in our relationships and the poem above. With my parents' permission, I also share a picture I took of my sisters, one happy weekend at the beach.



When we take pictures, we learn to see in a different way. The frame becomes our canvas. We can show what we truly see, what our heart sees. Taking pictures can be a way of practicing witnessing consciousness. I remember the day I took this picture. We were at the beach house of our parents; it must have been around 2009-2011. I started taking pictures and even explored the possibility of becoming a photographer, because I took some pictures of Anja, and she appeared beautiful. This is when I realized that beauty truly "is in the eye of the beholder." If I only watched carefully enough, with enough openness and kindness, I could always find beauty, no matter how unorthodox this expression of beauty might be. This picture is, for me, a celebration of the fun times we had (and still sometimes have!) When we are all in a good mood, we can play, as children, and just be companions, sisters, souls in a journey.

The long road to honesty

My dear Anja and Pia,

Many years have passed since I first wrote to you. Revisiting the first version of this poem, there are some lessons that remain. For example, I do believe that those who cannot see beyond disability (of any kind), need to learn to do so. To find beauty in the journey we need to be able to appreciate what is difficult. Tolerating is not enough. I've looked so many times into your eyes, trying to reach your souls...

There is nothing more illuminating than your untimely laughter, my dearest Pia. It arrives out of nowhere ... which makes it even more enjoyable. You make me so happy when I see you watching Mr. Bean in the television, twisting your body in a fashion that resembles a trance dance, because you are laughing so hard. I don't know if you understand, just how much you and Mr. Bean are alike! It sure seems so....

And you, my dearest Anja, when you surprise yourself, and open even more your (already) huge eyes. I admire so much how you continue learning and progressing, because of all the effort you put into each of your drawings and writings. You read and write, and we don't really know how you learned, since your formal education didn't go that far. It's your practice, your daily practice of sitting down and writing and reading for hours and hours. How could I not love to learn? How could I not want to continue learning, having your example?

I have also learned to pray from you, especially from you, Pia. The soul has no disability. I can see your spirit when you communicate with your God.

Still, in this poem, there are other thoughts, that are not so true, although I sure wanted them to be. You see, the problem was not that I didn't accept your love. It was always easy for me to be with you, us three. To play like little children, to be physically affectionate. What I didn't know was how to be with others, different to you. I lacked "social codes," and I can tell you it is very difficult to learn social code as an adolescent or young adult!

I also felt that I *had* to love you. And love cannot be imposed. Today I accept that I *can* love you.

As I re-elaborated in the second version of this poem, I don't know if it was good for us to be three. I've come to feel that it doesn't really matter. It's not like we had a choice, right? We are siblings for a reason (or many reasons), that continue to reveal themselves. I've asked myself many times "why did I have to grow up surrounded by people who are so differently abled? It still puzzles me that there are people who never get to know somebody with a cognitive disability.

I also cannot say that I've been able to master the "discovery of joy beyond all pain," as I wrote in the first version of the poem. I'm still struggling, trying to learn how to be authentically free. To be free is actually an act of profound responsibility. It is to become masters

of our own fate. First, we need to conquer our own stories, or our storied beings. This is why it is so important to recognize the stories we tell ourselves (and others) about ourselves.

I'm also letting go of the feeling that has pressured me for so long of trying to be a "good sister." I'm trying just to be a sister. I've found that it's all I can be for you, and that it probably is enough.

When I started writing this article, I thought that I'd write a third version of this poem. But today, I feel that I no longer need to work on this poem. I'm beginning to feel truly ready to start a completely new poem, where I will not be a protagonist, nor you. It will be other families, and the voices of other siblings shall be heard.

We're moving forward, my dear Anja and Pia.
With love,
Your little sister.

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RELATIONS TO LIVE BY

MORGAN GARDNER

ABSTRACT:

In 2017, I experienced the ARTS Pre-Conference of the Canadian Society for Studies in Education as a welcome refuge. As participants, we gathered to feed our minds, bodies and spirits via arts-based, contemplative practice. It became a day of (re)visioning academic life. In gratitude for this day, I share two poems from my research journal supporting my own (re)visioning of academic research. The poems are meditations on the small and large wonders of nature and their connection to the wealth of our fragile, mysterious lives. They explore our immeasurable interconnectedness to all of life and the life-giving relations that can be ignited as we awaken to these connections. Such kinds of poetic inquiry have expanded and deepened my understanding of voice and relationality within the context of research on democratic and social justice educational change.

BIO:

Morgan Gardner is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada. Her participatory action research (PAR) and collaborative self-study projects focus on partnering with marginalized youth and low-income communities confronting social-educational barriers in the goal to foster democratic and social justice change in high school. Engaging arts-informed, narrative and contemplative approaches play key roles in her research and teaching activities. Transformative education, place-based learning, eco-pedagogies, social justice and strengths-based approaches are also incorporated in her work. She has authored the book, *Linking Activism: Ecology, Social Justice and Education for Social Change*, co-edited the volume, *Narrating Transformative Learning in Education* and published numerous articles in educational journals. Dr. Gardner is a co-recipient of the R.W.B Jackson award from the *Canadian Journal of Education* for best peer-reviewed paper and the Canadian Network for Innovation in Education award.

Introduction

Over the past fifteen years, arts-based, contemplative practices have guided and energized my research partnerships with urban youth and economically disadvantaged communities seeking voice in educational change. These practices have sown healthy gardens of transformative learning and research. In turn, our possibilities for imagining relations we want to live by in and outside of school have been strengthened. As sites of educational innovation and nourishment, arts-based contemplative work continually supports

me to (re)envision my understandings and practices of research, teaching and social change. These practices offer me critical and tender openings to dwell in wonder(ing) and gratitude for daily encounters in our human and more-than-human world, encounters that are often overlooked in fast-paced academic environments.

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Red Winter Jewel

The cardinal
landed like a red jewel
against the
silky landscape of
freshly
fallen snow.

It began poking
the tender cloth
with its beak, looking
for seeds in
the undergarment
of dark earth.

It pierced the snow, this
way and that way,
like a needle marking
a fabric trail.

I watched in
wonder
as this radiant
red morsel
etched a
snow poem,
in offering,
as return.

And I asked myself,
how often
am I imparting
a poem
in gratitude
for the
nourishment
of my
own
wee life?

Everywhere to Land

I have dwelt
in the
curves
of dogberries,

placed both
hands
in
milkweed down,

and lingered in
gardens
of forgotten
branches.

There is
everywhere
to
land.

I have traveled
by red leaf
canoe,

tangled
through
eddy streams,

and
stretched
like a
yawn
in fields of
rust.

There is
everywhere
to
land.

I have harnessed
spirit
on rising
tides

and rode
through
clouds
of
mist.

There is
everywhere
to
land.

I have been
a
pebble
picking itself
up
a thousand
times

so I can
throw myself
back
into
the stream.

I have feasted
on nature's
immeasurable
worth
all along
the trail.

I have
caught
life
and
released
it,

caught it
and
released
it
again.

There
is everywhere
to
land.



MAKING PEACE WITH THE HIGHWOOD RIVER: ONE YEAR IN CONTEMPLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHS AND FLOWS

JENNIFER MARKIDES

ABSTRACT:

Since the 2013 Alberta floods, my relationship with the Highwood River has been changing. Before the disaster, I had taken the power of the river for granted. Then, the floodwaters ravaged the community of High River—my home. In the time after the flood, I engaged in a study of place as part of a course in *Holistic Approaches to Life and Living* led by Elder, Bob Cardinal of the Maskekosihk Enoch Cree Nation. I observed the flows through my camera lens: visiting and re-visiting the river, observing the seasonal changes, forming a stronger connection to my place in the community, and healing from the disaster that impacted my life in immeasurable ways. Please join me on the berm, to contemplate the ebbs and flows of water over time and place, with our more-than-human relatives as they present themselves in quiet moments.

BIO:

Jennifer Markides is a graduate student in the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. She is an educator, writer, photographer, and member of the Métis Nation. She lives in High River, Alberta with her husband and their two sons. Her SSHRC funded doctoral research explores the stories of youth living through the aftermath of the 2013 Alberta floods. She uses arts-based research to communicate with diverse audiences towards consciousness raising and action. She sees storytelling as an emancipatory act. Through the lens of her camera, she documents and reflects on the changes in her community.

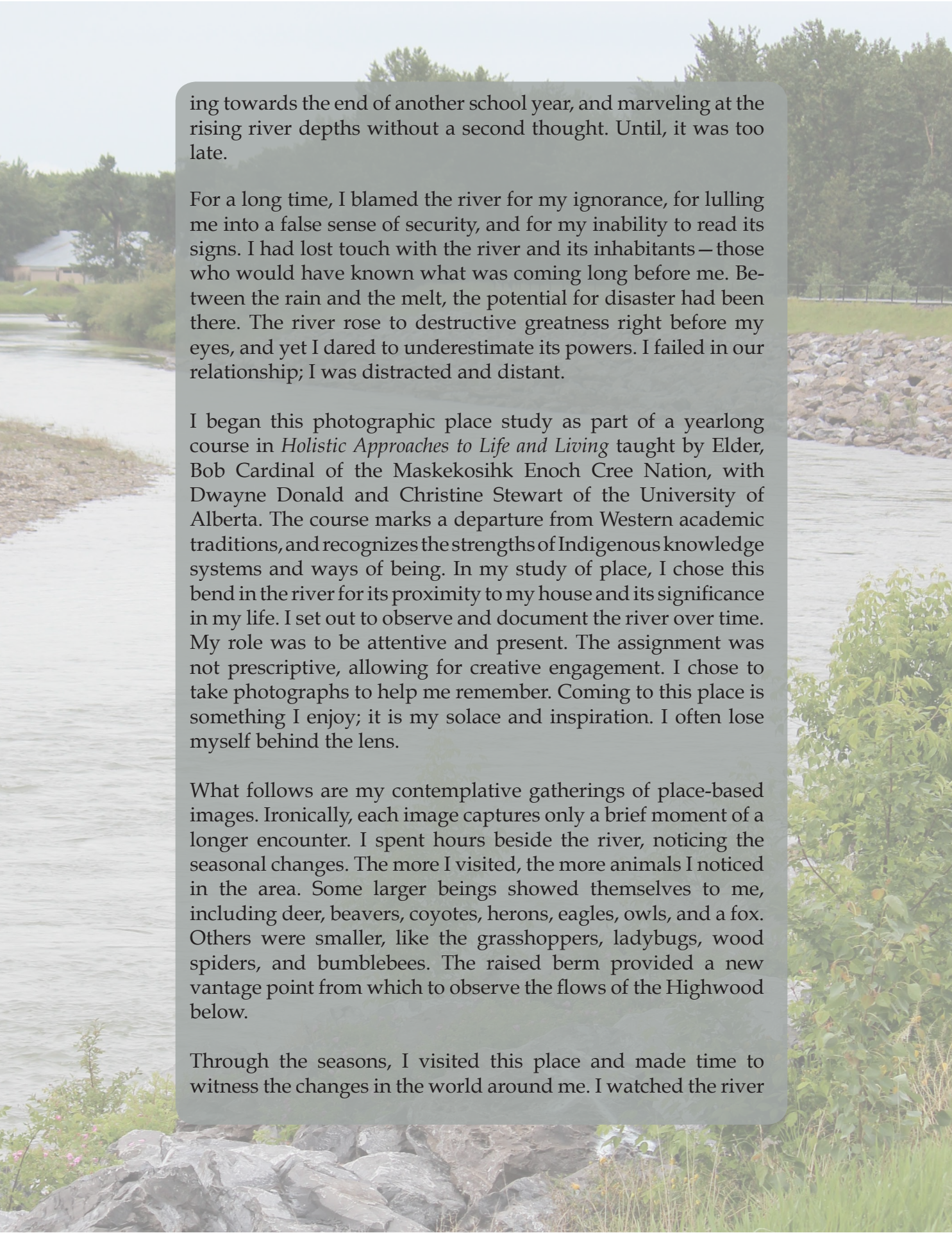
Overlooking the River

The Highwood River divides the town of High River into north and south. In June 2013, the river overflowed its banks and besieged our community for nearly two weeks. While the waters eventually receded, the town is still recovering today. The flood has left its mark on our community—a layer of sediment that cannot be washed away.

After the previous berm failed to keep the waters out, a new berm was constructed by adding earth and stone, width and height to the old one. This raised embankment is the barrier between the river and the southwest, where I live. In places where people once

had views to the river, we can now view into their homes from the newly paved pathway along the top of the berm.

The flood represents a turning point in my life: from stability to turmoil. It is the focus of my graduate research and the impetus for my ongoing healing. The river betrayed my trust. It violated my home, my neighbourhood, and my town. It is easy for me to personify and vilify the river, for I did not heed its warnings. The water levels were high that June, higher than I had ever seen them before, but that did not concern me. I went about my days: driving into the city, teach-



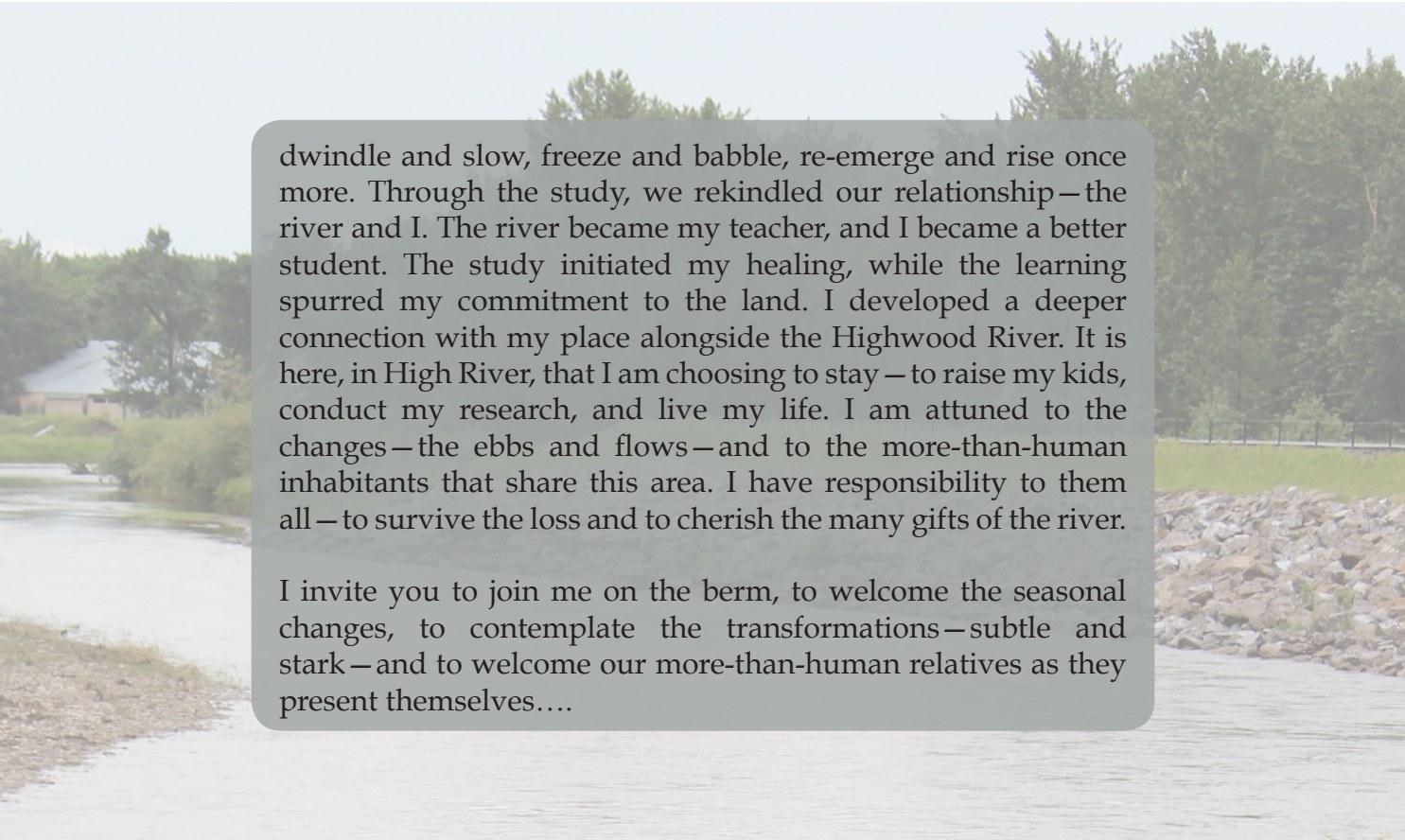
ing towards the end of another school year, and marveling at the rising river depths without a second thought. Until, it was too late.

For a long time, I blamed the river for my ignorance, for lulling me into a false sense of security, and for my inability to read its signs. I had lost touch with the river and its inhabitants – those who would have known what was coming long before me. Between the rain and the melt, the potential for disaster had been there. The river rose to destructive greatness right before my eyes, and yet I dared to underestimate its powers. I failed in our relationship; I was distracted and distant.

I began this photographic place study as part of a yearlong course in *Holistic Approaches to Life and Living* taught by Elder, Bob Cardinal of the Maskekosihk Enoch Cree Nation, with Dwayne Donald and Christine Stewart of the University of Alberta. The course marks a departure from Western academic traditions, and recognizes the strengths of Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of being. In my study of place, I chose this bend in the river for its proximity to my house and its significance in my life. I set out to observe and document the river over time. My role was to be attentive and present. The assignment was not prescriptive, allowing for creative engagement. I chose to take photographs to help me remember. Coming to this place is something I enjoy; it is my solace and inspiration. I often lose myself behind the lens.

What follows are my contemplative gatherings of place-based images. Ironically, each image captures only a brief moment of a longer encounter. I spent hours beside the river, noticing the seasonal changes. The more I visited, the more animals I noticed in the area. Some larger beings showed themselves to me, including deer, beavers, coyotes, herons, eagles, owls, and a fox. Others were smaller, like the grasshoppers, ladybugs, wood spiders, and bumblebees. The raised berm provided a new vantage point from which to observe the flows of the Highwood below.

Through the seasons, I visited this place and made time to witness the changes in the world around me. I watched the river



dwindle and slow, freeze and babble, re-emerge and rise once more. Through the study, we rekindled our relationship—the river and I. The river became my teacher, and I became a better student. The study initiated my healing, while the learning spurred my commitment to the land. I developed a deeper connection with my place alongside the Highwood River. It is here, in High River, that I am choosing to stay—to raise my kids, conduct my research, and live my life. I am attuned to the changes—the ebbs and flows—and to the more-than-human inhabitants that share this area. I have responsibility to them all—to survive the loss and to cherish the many gifts of the river.

I invite you to join me on the berm, to welcome the seasonal changes, to contemplate the transformations—subtle and stark—and to welcome our more-than-human relatives as they present themselves....



Fall Leaves River Bend - August 2016



Kingbirds of a Feather – August 2016



Man and River 1 – August 2016



Dark and Light River Bend – September 2016



Family Portrait - November 2016



Red Tips River Bend - November 2016



Man and River 2 - November 2016



Precarious Perch - November 2016



Blue Sky River Bend - February 2017



Grey Sky River Bend - March 2017



Ducks Landing at Sunset - April 2017



Home Renovations - April 2017



Sky Blue Jay - April 2017



Leafless River Bend - May 2017



Man and River 3 - May 2017



Camouflage - May 2017



Eagle Feathered Friend - June 2017



Heron Blue Clouds - June 2017



Man and River 4 - June 2017



Man and River 5 - June 2017



Golden Grasses River Bend - June 2017



Man and River 6 - June 2017



Catch of the Day - June 2017



Stormy Clouds River Bend - June 2017



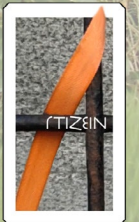
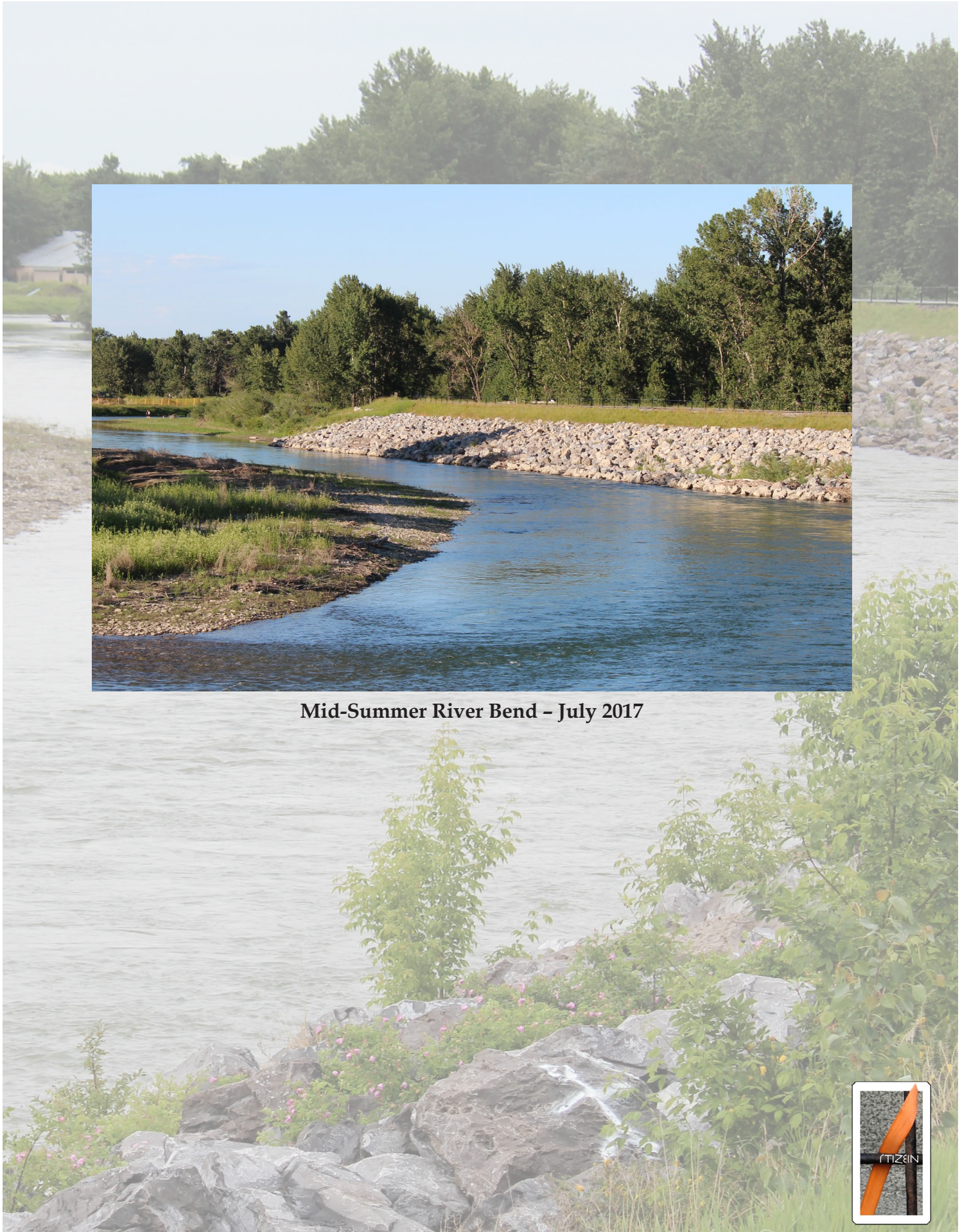
Cry of the King Fisher - June 2017



Camouflage 2 - July 2017



Mid-Summer River Bend - July 2017



AN ARTISTIC CONTEMPLATIVE INQUIRY: WHAT ARRIVES IN CO-CONTEMPLATING ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

MICHELLE SEARLE AND LYNN FELS

ABSTRACT:

Contemporary arts-based inquiry invites us to linger in moments, to reflect upon our lives, our encounters, our relationships within the grander context of the worlds within which we dwell and those that we co-create. Here, we explore the landscape of the arts in relation to assessment and evaluation. Through a collaborative artistic contemplative inquiry, an emergent dialogue exploring assessment and evaluation is recorded and presented as a found poem, "What Arrives." Our hope, when we embarked upon this artistic contemplation, was that we would evoke, provoke, and interrupt each other for the purpose of creating possibilities of alliance and (re)cognition when thinking about the arts, assessment, and evaluation.

BIO:

Michelle Searle is an Assistant Professor at Queen's University, Kingston, ON, Canada. She holds a PhD in curriculum with a focus on assessment and evaluation. She has received the Credentialed Evaluator (CE) designation from the Canadian Evaluation

Society, and she is also a member of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). Her research focuses on increasing the usefulness of program evaluation through a focus on collaborative evaluation approaches and innovative forms of knowledge dissemination that enhance capacity within organizations.

Lynn Fels is Associate Professor at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada. She is former Academic Editor of *Educational Insights*, an open-access journal that reimagines curriculum, research and education (www.educationalinsights.ca). Lynn co-authored *Exploring Curriculum: Performative Inquiry, Role Drama and Learning* with George Belliveau (Pacific Educational Press, 2008), and has authored numerous articles and chapters about performative inquiry, arts across the curriculum, and curriculum as lived experience. She is co-editor of *Arresting Hope: Women Taking Action in Prison Inside Out* (Inanna Press, 2015). Lynn is co-investigator in a major five year SSHRC Partnership Grant, researching arts for social change in Canada.

An Ontological Introduction: In the Dragon's Belly



March 28, 2008, at 9:04 PM:

Hi Michelle,
delighted to hear from you after all these years –
evaluation is a critical piece to education and arts education
smart move, really, to get a handle on it, so you
can begin questioning our assumptions and presumptions in this area...
you are wise to take your time, give yourself permission to breathe,
and let the work come to you...

Lynn

Figure 1: Photograph of Michelle and Lynn at the Story Dragon in London, Ontario (Photographer unknown, 1994)

July 27, 2009, at 9:16 PM:

Hi Lynn,
It was nice to see you at the CSSE.
I have attached a copy of the paper I wrote –
trying to figure out
where this work was going and how I was to navigate the space between
the arts and evaluation.
I used an imagined conversation between you and I
because I felt that our discussion
really helped me to breathe - a story of realization.

Michelle

November 15, 2009, at 2:10 AM

Dear Michelle,

I am curious to know how your research is unfolding;
evaluation is an area that I am currently exploring, and I am intrigued by your ideas,
and wondering how you imagine them in practice

You under-estimate the learning and impact that working with you brought to me, a gift,
that continues in our conversations around your ideas and work.

with care, Lynn

December 12, 2017 at 9:15 AM

Hi Lynn,
How are you?
I am thinking of submitting for this Artizein special issue... are you?
Maybe this would be good project for us to pursue together!
My thinking was along the lines of the arts or creativity in
evaluation/applied research as a provocateur of space for contemplative practice.
Early thinking! Let me know if you are interested...

Talk soon (I hope)
Michelle

Relationships matter. The emails above provide a glimpse into the relational history and interests we share, which has led to this opportunity to create together once again. As educators, researchers, and artists, we are both curious about the intersections of arts, assessment, and evaluation. Figure 1 represents our first encounter from decades past, when Lynn

was engaged with Michelle in an arts-based community experience in London, Ontario. Michelle was a grade twelve student exploring theatre and play creation. Lynn facilitated the co-creation of a readers theatre with narrative orchestration which engaged high school co-op students and audiences of young children in an immersive experience inside the belly of a large inflatable dragon. This performance was workshopped in area schools and then performed for many years at the London International Children's Festival. After this first encounter, Michelle eventually took flight to teach internationally, and later received her doctorate from Queen's University, specializing in arts-informed inquiry in program evaluation; meanwhile, Lynn journeyed through a doctoral program at the University of British Columbia, motivated by tugs on the sleeve, stop moments, and children's wisdom that led to performative inquiry.

Decades later, we reconnected at educational conferences – finding connections and disconnections in the places and processes of the academy.

"Do you want to skip out of this session?"

"Do you think anyone will notice?"

"We can make a dramatic exit. Meet me in 15 minutes at the reception desk."

"I can't sit still another minute...on the count of three: one two three!"

Conversations have unfolded on meandering pathways in parks, via long distance over the phone, and most recently, through Skype, as we connect to share lived experiences, engage with new ideas, encounter each other's understandings and push each other towards broader understanding of what matters. We are informed by our relationship and by a multiplicity of our experiences as women/artists/educators/mothers/ daughters/ sisters/friends, as we attempt to view and participate in the world thoughtfully, creatively, and expressively. We align our work to that of Freire (1993) when he indicated that the purpose of our work, as educators, researchers, and evaluators, is "to stimulate doubt, criticism, curiosity, questioning, a taste for risk-taking, the adventure of creating" (p. 50). We invoke and evoke artistic practices in pedagogy and research to provide an authenticity where experience and embodiment co-exist in knowledge creation and representation. We seek as artists, and educators

A space that creates a place of intimacy

Where you are safe to explore the possible

and the 'impossible'

To test the boundaries

Safe in the knowledge of

make-believe and creativity and compassion

The dragon won't eat you
But rather, welcome you inside –
To tell another story
To pick up where you left off – or
Begin another adventure, completely afresh
– An excerpt from Michelle's commonplace book¹

Through walking together in conversation and sharing articles we have individually written, we have become increasingly aware of how our experiences in the arts, assessment, and evaluation have prepared us for engaging in new ways of creating, appreciating, and inviting communities to explore artful practices as contemplative processes for meaning-making (e.g., Cole & McIntyre, 2004; Costantino & Greene, 2003; Dart & Davies, 2003). Our challenge, in our teaching and careers, and in this, our first artistic contemplative inquiry, is to create and dwell in spaces of possibility as sites of inquiry in search of resonance, possible dissonance, and learning.

As co-authors, we embark collaboratively here and now upon a contemplative journey that spans decades, focusing our inquiry on the integration of the arts within assessment and evaluation practices as we engage in the external evaluation of our careers in the academy and our assessment of the students, and programs, that we teach. We view this first artistic contemplation as an action site of collegial meaning making, in which our emergent dialogue arrives through art making. For us, artistic contemplative inquiry is a multi-stage endeavor, beginning with collaborative art making, during which a conversation arrives as we contemplate a chosen topic, in this case, the role of the arts in assessment and evaluation, followed by shared reflection, a recognition of themes, and finally, poetic response, presented here as a poem. Thus, inquiry through artmaking and conversation makes visible what matters, both in our aural and artistic explorations. Then, through reflecting upon our conversation and the artistic artifacts that we have co-created, and through poetic engagement with our words, we arrive at a possible new *interstanding*² of assessment, evaluation, and the arts as experienced in our everyday lives. Oddly, in writing this piece now, what arrives foremost upon reflection is the *woundedness* of assessment and evaluation, where too often an offering is ignored or refused, where expectation dismisses the unexpected. And we surface, in this space of artistic contemplative inquiry, the loneliness of an academic's burden and a desire for co-creation and belonging.

In the following artistic contemplative inquiry, we explore in conversation tensions we have experienced and continue to experience in our practice to connect the arts, assessment, and evaluation. Our ideas about evaluation and assessment resonate with our shared values and those that pull at our hearts; our collaborative contemplative inquiry invites us to linger, to be present with each other, to be mindfully aware – in conversation, in artmaking, in reflection of our lives – of the gaps, tensions, and resistances that we encounter. We offer,

What Arrives in Co-Contemplating Evaluation through Artmaking, a found poem, created from the recorded notes of our emergent dialogue, interwoven throughout the text as an invitation to the reader to engage with us in this inquiry, as we seek, to “enlarge the space of the possible.”³

What Arrives....

Our working together then and now
Questions and compliments!
“you look the same!”

Memories
laughter and tears
time going so fast
wanting to be present in each moment
lingering
holding the space open

Contemplative Inquiry through the Arts

We encounter each other on Skype at a designated time, with a promise to engage in collaborative artmaking, as a catalyst and provocation. Using the arts genre of collage (Butler-Kisber, 2008), and attending to our emergent dialogue, we record what emerges through our shared artmaking. Robertson (2002) explains that, “collage reflects the very way we experience the world with objects given meaning not from something within themselves, but rather through the way we perceive they stand in relationship to one another” (p. 2, as cited in Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2011).

During our encounter, we attend to our artmaking, dialogue, and the emergent learning that arrives in textual interplay: interruptions, fragments, images, in seeking to make visible our learning, as we engage together in our inquiry. The multiple layers of words, images, fragments of conversation evoked are spatial and temporal artifacts of meaning making, memories, experiences, as we engage in a unique opportunity to explore what matters in regard to assessment and evaluation and the arts. Meaning making and resonance, awakening to what is of importance, occurs – but not easily. We find that we are required to move at a slower pace as we come together in artmaking and dialogue: deliberation about colours and placement of ribbons, and words, and buttons, and feelings. Our conversation invites revelation.

Artistic Contemplation: Collaging Dialogue through Skype

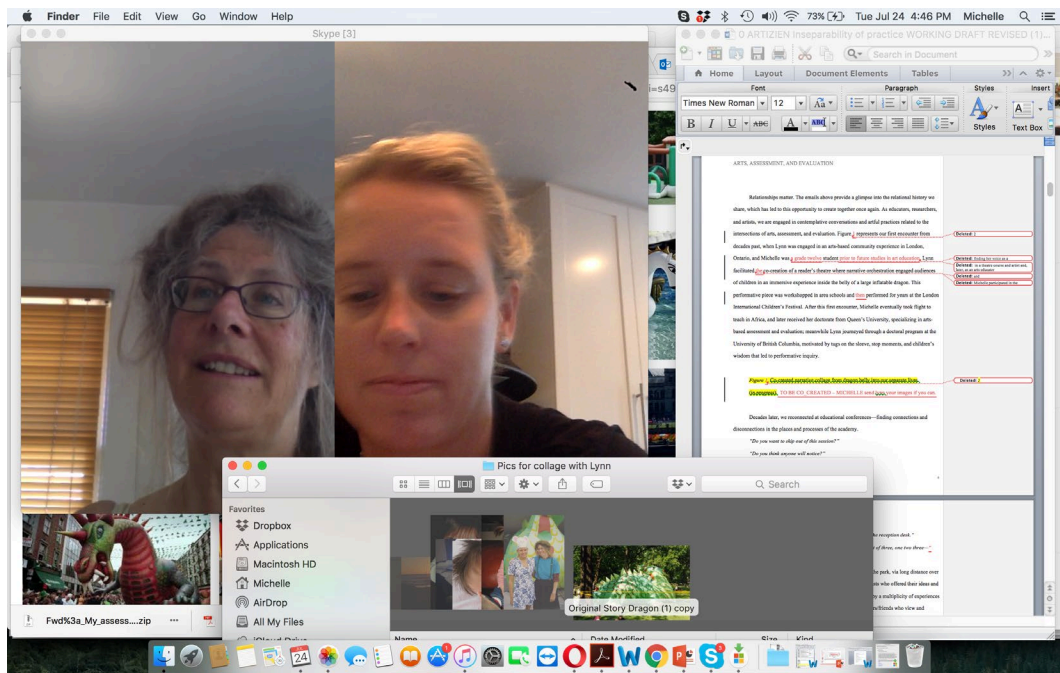


Figure 2: Screen shot moments before our artistic co-contemplation of assessment and evaluation through the arts begins (Searle, 2018)

As Walsh, Bickel, and Leggo (2015) remind us, “contemplative and arts-based practices merge, emerge, and resonate in our work as artists, researchers, and teachers” (p. 1). In this contemplative journey, we gift each other, as co-authors and colleagues, the opportunity, space, and time to think about, question, and try out ideas of possible arguments, reflections, and concerns regarding concepts that are infrequently interconnected, namely, the arts, assessment, and evaluation. By drawing from and positioning ideas from our practices, we arrive at new connections that are both reflective and generative as we surprise ourselves in the direction our artistic contemplative inquiry takes us.

Our conversation is rife with frustration about our demanding careers, about lack of understanding in our respective fields, about the harm that arrives in the marking of students, about what drags us underwater, as we struggle to breathe. Our conversation is pedagogical as we share ideas, experiences, stories, positioning ourselves anew in relationship to each other as educators, colleagues, friends. Time eludes us, and yet, as Michelle cuts and pastes, as I ponder colour, working from a distance, offering words; the tyranny of the urgent begins to disappear, we fall into an easy rhythm of simply being present and thinking through ideas together. Although Skype does not seem like the ideal or most appealing medium in which to co-create, we are required to bracket off time from within our worlds to be enlivened together.

What Arrives ...

Meaningful...

Evaluation is exhausting....

Assessment and evaluation is there to "do to" students

Disrupt that notion,

What if we engage with them?

More fluid...

Who is responsible for whose evaluation?

What is it we are evaluating?

We recognize, the fullness of their knowing can't be captured in a single artifact....

One moment in time.

Standardized testing....

Should Should Should Should Should

Artistic contemplation through inquiry invites us to linger in moments, to reflect upon our lives, our actions, our relationships within the grander context of the worlds within which we dwell and those that we co-create, with deep listening and heart.

What Arrives ...

Counting

Evaluation focuses capacity

Reminds me of a student who refused to answer a question,

"Why should I answer you? You already know the answer!"

Isn't it more interesting to look into those spaces and voids and gaps that we don't know?

Who you work with has meaning and value -

In our field of education

the solo author has more weight

we work collaboratively with colleagues

and encourage our students to collaborate...

How are these collaborations and co-authored papers assessed?

What Arrives ...

Tenure

The ultimate evaluation

Or is the ultimate evaluation an unexpected hug

from a child in New Zealand after
we participated in
a playbuilding activity together?

Reminds me of my student in Sri Lanka –
He couldn't accept the utopian world we were creating in theatre class –
couldn't wouldn't engage in class,
Our utopian world (what education could be like)
made the juxtaposition impossible
to navigate the world outside
Like he had an awakening

His mother asked me why I was ruining school for her son by questioning it
Maybe that's not what's ruining it...

Trungpa (2008) likens the influence of the arts as a way of “paying more attention to the space that exists around us” (pp. 22-23). What can we learn about artful forms of research and pedagogy that can enhance learning in assessment and evaluation? What are the values related to the arts in education and research, and how are these sustained when we move into the worlds of assessment and evaluation?

What Arrives ...

Evaluation

Who is surveillancing whom?
and for what purpose?

We're in the process of dismantling
our competitive based merit review system
changing it to a professional development model – unique to each person....

Humanizing

“not that we have to do all the things on the list,
but recognizing that there are many possible ways to be in action”

Comparative Merit
IMPACT!!

Playfulness, creativity, and imagination have long been recognized as key contributors to learning (e.g., Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002; Piaget, 1951; Thomas & Brown, 2011). Walsh, Bickel & Leggo (2015) suggest that contemplative practices offer a chance to be both present in the moment and awake to the possibilities of the unknown. The arts help to create and represent

understanding or meaning making as well as act as catalysts for experiences of abstraction and knowledge formation (e.g., Gaut, 2003). Thus, our artistic contemplative inquiry, in which the artmaking and emergent conversation become both artifact and catalyst, evokes further reflection, meaning-making, and action, as we move forward into our teaching and research. A flurry of names, concepts, ideas tumble out, unharnessed as Michelle places buttons, like beacons on the collage— *(in the midst of our artmaking, we are suddenly compelled to send each other a blizzard of emails, sharing all the pieces, papers, ideas that we want the other to read)!*

What Arrives ...

Evaluation -

Collection of postcards about narratives of learning (Fels, 2015)

A quote, an image, a tug on the sleeve, and why the learning matters

From postcard to letters talking about school to sharing their lives

Raising Creativity -Zak - a five part video (Zak, 2014)

Reciprocal Vulnerability (Thomasson, 2017)

Shame and Intimacy (Brown, 2010, 2012)

Complexity thinking... contemplative practices which we are falling into....stops....
(Sumara and Davis, 1997; Walsh et. al., 2015; Appelbaum 1995)...

Contemplating, wondering

talking tangents,

feedback loops

recurse learning

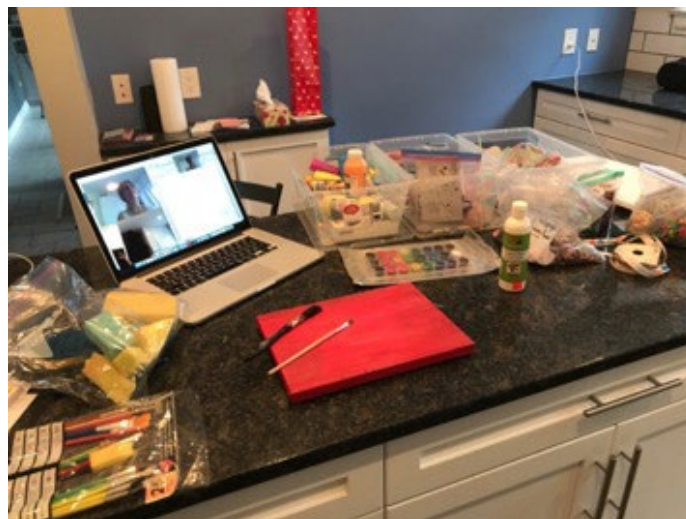


Figure 3: Photograph of art making in progress for this paper (Searle, 2018)

Through our artistic contemplative inquiry, we are reminded that O'Donoghue (2009) described arts research as being rooted in the "belief that the arts have a unique ability to contribute particular insights into and enhance understandings of phenomena that are of interest" (p. 352). The arts are an example of visible imaginative intellect; they are also processes for inquiring and a means of understanding (e.g., Barone & Eisner, 2006). Arts-inspired research is flexible and can provide multiple entry points (Knowles & Cole, 2008). Through the use of arts practices in contemplation, in pedagogy, and in our research, we model that there is more than one single, linear path. Rather, the arts offer holistic processes that unite theory and practice, connecting the personal and universal, bridging individuals from various communities of practice. This holism may reveal previously unrealized, shifted, or new perspectives, and may lead to experiences that garner insights through reflective practice. In addition, the arts can provide contemplative spaces where exploration with creativity, curiosity, and wonder promote dialogue that may stimulate new knowledge or ways of knowing.

Although each visual and performance arts genre has distinctive elements, we know that the different genres also share a view that encompasses creative processes and media as a means of communicating. The variety of arts genres might include, but are not limited to:

- literary forms (e.g., Barone, 2001; Dunlop, 1999; Richardson, 1994);
- visual art (e.g., Butler-Kisber, 2007, 2008; Sullivan, 2010);
- performance (e.g., Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Miller, 2001; Shigematsu, 2016).
- dance or folk art (e.g., Bagley & Cancienne, 2002; Ball, 2008; Cancienne & Snowber, 2003).

In our artistic contemplative inquiry, we use collage and poetic techniques while experimenting with materials for the purpose of engaging with each other, our ideas, and lived experience.

During our artistic contemplative inquiry, we agreed that one of the core values across these artistic forms is being attuned to cognitive, affective, and aesthetic dimensions, which are intertwined in contemplative, creative, and dialogic action. These dimensions are heightened and given voice through the qualities, properties, materials, and capacities that artistic forms enable. Looking back fondly, we can see that in the decades since the adoption of different research genres, such as performative inquiry (e.g., Fels, 1999, 2010, 2012), research-based theatre (e.g. Belliveau & Lea, 2011), a/r/tography (e.g., Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008), narrative inquiry (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), poetic inquiry (Prendergast, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2009), embodied inquiry (Snowber, 2016), and arts-informed research (Cole & Knowles, 2008), these expanded arts approaches illustrate the methodological pluralism in social and educational research that has been realized (Barone, 2008).

What Arrives ...

You used red – why?
Red is the colour of anger
It is also the flip side of passion and love
We can't do the work we do as scholars
 as women, as mothers, as artists
 without passion
Because the work simply requires it
It's a colour to be present with.

What Arrives ...

Our presence
I feel a sense of responsibility for this course
 It's a practice
to have student teachers experience

Classroom management
Lesson planning
Unit planning
Assessment
Practicum, as we sit at the back at the room and judge them
And tell them what they're not doing right.

Or our responsibility is to tell them what *is* going right,
To ask what's possible –
 why and where they are going with their thinking,
 and if anyone else wants to go there?

Gallagher (2000) cautions, “the wrong kinds of assessment can halt a process and arrest its movement” (p. 109). It seems oppressive to think about or to allow an assessment-oriented educational culture to limit the generative potential of the arts in education (Gallagher, 2000; Goodwyn, 2012) or in research. The danger is that the one being assessed, and the work being offered becomes under-valued in the strictures and expectations of the conventional evaluator or evaluation structure. As arts educators, we recognize that there are multiple pathways for artful explorations and contemplations that reflect the possibilities for “seeing” differently (Lather, 2007). Park and Rabi (2015) speak to how the arts can infuse both courage and energy into inquiry. Both of these qualities are essential in the work of assessment and evaluation as well as in teaching and research, more broadly.

What Arrives ...

Headmaster made me change the evaluation, assessment
Wasn't giving grades
Feedback, journals, co-constructing learning together,
Off the wall stuff!

Stopped putting marks on papers that I would spend hours on in commenting
I watched them look for the mark.
I stopped doing the marks so they would listen
to the comments
to my response to their work

Judgement comes in many layers
from everywhere

What was that student resisting?
You took the ground away from him
And opened up the sky....freefall
Like the wild coyote in The Road Runner –

What do we do with our anger?
What do we do with our hopes?



Figure 4: Photograph of mixed media piece on canvas created by Michelle Searle in artistic contemplative inquiry with Lynn Fels (Searle, 2018)

Figure 4, created during our contemplative artistic inquiry, illustrates how the collage was impacted by our emergent conversation, and vice-versa; materials chosen interact with written text— ribbons and buttons weave a meandering path through words, questions,

frustrations. The collage shows our hope: that when imagined holistically, assessment and evaluation have the potential to be transformed from being judgment-focused to pedagogical and transformative. Our conception of assessment and evaluation is one where educators encourage students to take risks and invest in the experience of learning — especially if the bringing together of assessment, evaluation and the arts move toward creating a culture of creativity and collaboration, where accountability for learning is a reciprocal responsibility. Our fear is that, too often, the mark of assessment and evaluation imposed on colleagues, students, upon each other, bruises hearts, limits motivation, and fails to celebrate what each individual has to offer. What might happen if individuals, collectives, are given voice, agency, and opportunities to engage in assessment and evaluation activities that are pedagogical, arts-generated, and enlivening?

Just make a mark and see where it takes you.
— Peter H. Reynolds, *The Dot*

Throughout our artistic contemplative inquiry together, we explored how, although conceptually different, the arts, assessment, and evaluation are inter-connected because they all contain elements of ideas and action, of theory and practice, and of emergent possibilities. These linkages are metaphorically illustrated in each of the buttons and ribbons on the collage above. Like many artist-scholars, we hold a desire to engage in and create work that has the potential for transformation. This transformation may be physical, emotional, or intellectual; when there is space for hope, inquiry, and learning, there are no limits.

What Arrives ...

Evaluation can be interruption

conversation
pedagogical
intervention

Evaluation provides/requires/invites/offers
opportunity for introspection
collaborative evaluation as shared responsibility
how can we understand that evaluation is a co-construction.....co-creation

what I'm paying attention to is your language
language reveals one's positionality

what is the fundamental difference between

co-construct?
criteria, finite, leverage and co-create?
emergent, open-ended, emergent, reciprocal, relational

authentic learning....
I don't know how many students I have...

It all comes back to counting
I want to do work that is meaningful,
fun, engaging, and real

I don't know how to access the system
It is so locked in...

How to evaluate— an accounting of what matters?
Failure to launch is not an option....

Failing, you learn a lot, maybe you learn the most....

Throughout our artistic contemplative inquiry together, we speak to the value of and need for assessment and evaluation processes that allow diverse individuals to show up, to be acknowledged, to be visible for the contributions they make. By exploring our ideas about assessment and evaluation as an artful and dialogic encounter, we created opportunities for ourselves to participate in a process that sustains and nourishes the energy with which scholar-artists engage within the world. The artmaking and dialogue through this artistic contemplative inquiry allowed us to explore how the arts play a viable role in invoking and evoking new thinking about assessment and evaluation. And yet, through sharing our stories and feelings, evident both in the artmaking and our emergent conversation, we also came to understand how disturbed we are by the level of resistance we encounter as artist scholars seeking to make a difference in conventional ways of assessment and evaluation. The interweaving of artmaking and conversation alerted us to what we have yet to say, yet to learn. We recognize that we want to explode the idea of what counts as *impact*. The word *impact* makes us recoil. From this artistic contemplative inquiry together, we learned what becomes possible and enlivening when we take the time and opportunity to engage with each other in a meaningful and artful way. Assessment and evaluation was our *raison d'être* for engaging in this artistic contemplative inquiry together; we have however, come to realize how isolated we are in our scholarship and how much we value the gift of each other's companionship, here and now.

What Arrives ...

Relaxing, this artmaking, our talking
channels my anger into doing something

Are academic journals by which we are judged
a way of silencing our anger?
of taking away action?

Journals impose a distancing world
They divorce people from themselves
from each other.

We want it to be real –
but don't make it too vulnerable
Because it makes the rest of us uncomfortable

This poetic and playful writing reveals what arrived through artmaking and collegial conversation, reflection, and poetic response. Our artistic contemplative inquiry enabled us to question one another about a troubling issue to which we are both deeply committed, and in doing so, created a space to share stories of failure and hopefulness that spoke to our tensions, experiences, and the challenges we encounter interweaving the arts, assessment, and evaluation within the multiple structures where we work and have worked as educators. Perhaps, most importantly, our artmaking as collaborative contemplative inquiry has given us time to immerse ourselves in our ideas: to talk and be together. This time, to be in relationship, to play with ideas, to co-create and contemplate what matters in an artful way, is a gift to ourselves and, possibly, one we can offer to readers. We have learned through our time together that we need to value what we bring to evaluation and to appreciate the reflective time that evaluation demands, yet is so often forgotten. Assessment and evaluation offer pedagogy, intervention, possibility, inspiration, and occasionally, heartbreak. By engaging the arts within a dialogic contemplation of ideas, feelings, stories, a playfulness emerges, memories are evoked, tears shared, and we are further encouraged and determined to hold fast to our commitment of reimagining assessment and evaluation as an artful endeavor.

What Arrives ...

What is all that typing?

I am making a record of our conversation

... we didn't talk about time, resistance, the heartbreak

*time, resistance, and heartbreak, arrive here and now
in this moment, tugging at our sleeve, we'll add it into our text*

... playfulness, and inspiration, that's missing from our conversation

*yet we have been playful and inspired in our artistic contemplation
together in inquiry....*

What would happen if we engage in another artistic contemplative inquiry on motherhood and the academy? Or on classroom management?

Or let's explore the unspoken angst and anxiety of our students

artistic contemplative inquiry makes visible
feelings, ideas, and concepts, questions, that shape our actions
and, in their absence the gaps that call us to attention.

Let's give ourselves an A plus and fill the space with words

let's not give ourselves a mark, don't we leave enough marks on our students?

It's end of term. Students are asking about criteria, final marks, missing assignments.

Let's fill the space with silence and see what arrives.

How do **you** decide what matters?

Notes

¹A commonplace book is a text where the author compiles and generates knowledge, it pulls together pieces such as quotations, poetic verse, passages from texts, questions, doodles, notes, reflective sketches in one space. Read more about this contemplative practice here: <https://evernote.com/blog/taking-note-commonplace-books/>

²Taylor & Saarinen (1991) suggest that understanding is impossible, as nothing stands under; that rather meaning-making is created between, thus the word interstanding.

³Sumara & Davis, 1997.

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